

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
ARCHÆOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA

ARCHÆOLOGICAL  
LIBRARY

---

ACCESSION NO. 68006

CALL No. 572.55455 / 242

D.G.A. 79

63706

225

10

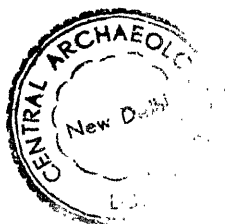
# **The Tribes and Castes of Cochin**





# The Tribes and Castes of Cochin

68006



Volume II

*L.K. Anantha Krishna Iyer*

572.55455

Iye



**COSMO PUBLICATIONS**  
**NEW DELHI-110002 INDIA**  
1981

68006 9.11.81  
प्रवाप्ति संख्या..... दिनांक...  
निर्देश संख्या 572.55455/Iye  
नई दिल्ली

केन्द्रीय पुरातत्व पुस्तकालय

FIRST PUBLISHED 1912  
THIS EDITION 1981

COSMO PUBLICATIONS  
24B, ANSARI ROAD  
NEW DELHI-110002

Printed by  
MEHRA OFFSET PRESS  
NEW DELHI-110002

# CONTENTS.

## INTRODUCTION.

	Page
CHAPTER I. <i>Nayars</i> : Introduction—Origin and tradition of the caste—The military character of the <i>Nayars</i> —Their military dress and mode of fighting—Habitations—Auspicious times for the construction of houses—Inauspicious times—Internal structure of the caste—Titles—Marriage prohibitions. . .	1-21
CHAPTER II. Marriage customs—Puberty customs—(Thirandukuli)—Sambandham—The orthodox view of this form of marriage—Polyandry—Origin of the custom of polyandry—Polygamy—Duration of conjugal union—Pulikudi—Childbirth—First birthday celebration—A Nair Tarawad or Marumakkathayam family. . .	22-51
CHAPTER III. Inheritance—Tribal organisations—Administration of justice—Feudalism in the Cochin State—Village organisation and village life—Village pastimes—Personal adornment of the actors—Mohiniyattam—Songs—Bhadrakali pattu—Ganapathi pattu—The chief festivals—Onam—Hand ball matches—Thiruvathira—Vishu—Dasara or Ayutha puja—Sivarami—Important local festivals—The Kongupada festival of Chittur—The 'Pana' festival of Chittur—Agricultural ceremonies—Nira—Puthari—Ucharal. . .	52-79
CHAPTER IV. Religion—Serpent worship— tutelary deities—Demon worship—Worship of animals and plants—Folk-tales—Funeral customs. . .	80-96
CHAPTER V. Occupation—Food—Social status—Dress—Jewellery. .	97-102
CHAPTER VI. Introduction— <i>The Kadupattans</i> —Their chief titles—Sub-divisions of the caste—Habitations—Marriage prohibitions—Marriage customs—Puberty Customs—Inheritance—Caste assembly—Religion—Funeral customs—Occupation—Social status—Adhyapaka Samajam—Conclusion— <i>The Teiakkathalavans</i> — <i>The Veluthedans</i> — <i>The Chaliyans</i> —Traditional origin—Marriage customs—Inheritance—Religion—Funeral customs—Occupation— <i>The Tarakans</i> —Conclusion. . .	103-121
CHAPTER VII. <i>The Ambalavasis</i> — <i>The Nambidis</i> — <i>The Adikals</i> — <i>The Muttatus</i> —Marriage customs—Inheritance—Religion—Funeral Ceremonies—Social status— <i>The Ilayatus</i> — <i>The Chakkiyars</i> —Kudiyattom—Mattavilasam—Parakkum kuttu—Kuttus—Patakam— <i>The Nambiyars</i> —Pushpakan Nambiyars—Thiyyati Nambiyar—Chakkiyar Nambiyar—The Chengazhi Nambiyar— <i>The Variyars</i> —Manners and customs—Puberty customs— <i>The Pisharotis</i> —Manners and customs— <i>The Potthuvals</i> — <i>The Marars</i> — <i>The Samanthans</i> —Internal structure of the caste—Customs and manners—Conclusion. . .	122-150
CHAPTER VIII. <i>The Kshatriyas</i> —Marriage customs—Sambandham—Inheritance—Domestic ceremonies—Anti-natal ceremonies	

Recd. from Associated Book & Centre, New Delhi - 1 dated vide B.M. No. 1309  
 dated 1.9.81 price Rs. 375/- for 3 Volumes Set

—Post-natal ceremonies—Funeral customs—Religion—Dress and ornaments—Diet—Games—Social status—Conclusion ..	151—168
CHAPTER IX. <i>The Brahmans</i> :—Introduction— <i>The Nambuthiris</i> —Traditions of origin—Sub-divisions of the caste—Habitations—Marriage prohibitions—Marriage customs—Marriage among the Thazhakkatt Ammonians—Postpuberty marriage among the Nambuthiris and the causes that led to marriage before puberty—Pregnancy rites—Delivery rites—Post-natal ceremonies—Jatakarmam—Namakaranam—Nishkramanam—Annaprasanam—Chowlam—Karnavédham—Vidhyārambham—Upanayanam—Upanishedam—Godnam—Chukriyam—Samāvarthnam—Polygamy—Smārthavicharam—Inheritance—Adoption ..	169—216
CHAPTER X. <i>Jotishasāstram</i> or Hindu astrology including astronomy—Magic or Mantravādham ..	217—239
CHAPTER XI. Religion—Ritualistic Brahminism—Popular or Puranic religion—Deities in temples—The consecration ceremony—The daily routine of pujas performed in a temple—Vadakkunnathan temple—Perumal temple—Thiruvilvamala temple—Thiruvanchikulam temple—Trippunittura temple—Ganapathy Homam—Utsavam in a typical temple—Kadavallur varam—Sr Sankaracharyar—Customs and manners peculiar to the Nambuthiris—Funeral customs—Pollution—Caste government—Occupation—Social status—Appearance—Games—Dress—Ornaments—Food—Present social condition of the Nambuthiris—Conclusion ..	284—288
CHAPTER XII. <i>The Tamil Brahmans</i> —Internal structure of the caste—Habitations—Marriage customs—Puberty customs—Nuptials or Garbhādanam—Valakappu—Pumsavanam—Seemantham—Childbirth—Delivery rites—Polygamy—Adultery and divorce—Inheritance—Family and social organisation—Religion—Temple-worship—Fasts—Feasts and Festivals—Funeral customs—Śrādhā ceremony—Tonsure of widows—Occupation—Food, Appearance, dress and ornaments—The present social condition of the Tamil Brahmans..	289—313
CHAPTER XIII. <i>The Embrans and Konkani Brahmans</i> — <i>The Embrans</i> —Traditional origin of the caste— <i>The Konkani Brahmans</i> —Traditional origin and history of the caste—The probable period of their settlement in Konkhan—Goa—Emigration and settlement of the Konkhanas in Cochin—Marriage prohibitions—Marriage—Inheritance—Caste Government—Religion—Astrological ceremonies—Spiritual rulers of the community—Gods—Funeral customs—Occupation—Social status—Food ..	314—363
CHAPTER XIV. <i>The Non-indigenous castes</i> . Ambattān :—Origin of the caste—Sub-divisions of the caste—Marriage customs—Religion—Funeral customs—Occupation.	
<i>Andi—Chakkan</i> :—Marriage customs—Inheritance—Religion—Funeral customs—Occupation of the caste. <i>Devanga</i> :—Sub-divisions—Marriage customs—Puberty customs—Inheritance—Religion—Funeral customs—Occupation—Conclusion.	
<i>Kaikkolan</i> :—Sub-divisions of the caste—Marriage prohibition—Marriage customs—Inheritance—Religion—Funeral ceremonies—Occupation—Personal appearance.	

<i>Kakkalan</i> :—Marriage customs—Puberty customs—Delivery customs—Religion—Funeral customs—Occupation—Rope-dancing—Social status.	
<i>Kavaras</i> :—Marriage customs—Religion—Funeral customs—Occupation—Social status.	
<i>Kudumi Chetti</i> :—Sub-divisions of the caste—Marriage customs—Religion—Funeral customs—Occupation—Food, dress and ornaments.	
<i>Kumbaran</i> :—Marriage customs—Caste Government—Religion—	
<i>Odden</i> :—Origin of the caste—Puberty customs—Marriage customs—Religion—Funeral customs—Occupation—Personal adornment.	
<i>Olan</i> —Marriage customs—Religion—Funeral customs—Occupation—Dress.	
<i>Pandaram</i> —Marriage customs—Religion—Funeral customs—Occupation	
<i>Vezhamban</i> . .. ..	364—399
CHAPTER XV. <i>The Jews</i> :—Introduction—Early immigration and Settlement of the Jews on the Malabar coast—The date of the Copper plate grant—Their subsequent History—Sub-division among the Jews—Habitations—Marriage prohibitions—Marriage customs—Puberty customs—Pregnancy rites—Circumcision—Rite of redemption—Polygamy—The Levirate—Adultery and divorce—Inheritance—Social organisation—Religion—The daily life of the Jews—The feast of the Tabernacle—Passover—The feast of Pentecost—Feast of the Trumpbets—Funeral customs—Occupation—Education—Population—Food Dress and other ornaments—Purity of the race—Physical characters—Types of pigmentation—Priority of settlement—Conclusion ..	400—434
CHAPTER XVI. <i>The Syrian Christians</i> —Origin and early History of the Christian church in Malabar—History of the Syrians during the Portuguese period—Romo-latinites or Latincars—The Syrian church not Nestorian—Jacobite Syrians—Chaldeans—Bishop of Anur—Protestants—Different sects—Habitations—Marriage prohibitions—Marriage customs among the Jacobite Syrians—Marriage customs among the Romo Syrians—Puberty customs—Religion—Jacobite Syrian church—The present conditions of the Non-Romo Syrians—Funerals—Roman Catholic religion—Baptism—Baptismal names—Church Government—Occupation—Food—Appearance dress, and ornaments—The present social condition of the Syrian community ..	435—458
CHAPTER XVII. <i>Jonakan Mappilla</i> :—Traditional origin of the race—Habitations—Sub-divisions and marriage prohibitions—Marriage customs—Polygamy—Remarriage of widows—divorce—Pregnancy and delivery rites—Postnatal ceremonies circumcision—Inheritance—Religion—Festivals—Mosques—Magic sorcery and witchcraft—Funeral customs—Occupation—Personal appearance dress and ornaments—Food—Education—The mappilla songs—Conclusion .. ..	459—484
INDEX .. ..	485—504



THE  
**COCHIN TRIBES AND CASTES.**

—: o:—

**INTRODUCTION.**

---

Owing to ill-health my erudite friend, Professor A. H. Keane, was unable to write the introduction to the second volume of Mr. L. K. Anantha Krishna Iyer's monograph, "The Cochin Tribes and Castes", and at a somewhat late date I was requested to do so. Those who have studied the earlier Volume of this enthusiastic and energetic ethnologist will cordially welcome the continuation of his ethnographic researches. The first volume gives a descriptive account of the hill and jungle tribes and other low castes of the State in the ascending order of social status. These backward jungle folk have a peculiar interest for ethnologists as they appear to retain many of the customs and beliefs which we may well suppose characterised mankind in very ancient times; they are ethnological survivals which bear the same relation to anthropology as that borne to zoology by those generalised or persistent types dating from geological antiquity in various groups of animals that rejoice the heart of the zoologist.

The present volume deals with other groups, higher in social grade but not of less interest or importance for the student, for the State of Cochin is fortunate in possessing an assemblage of tribes and castes which is without parallel elsewhere in an area of equal size.

The Nayars have been frequently alluded to by ethnologists and sociologists on account of their peculiar social customs. They were formerly the swordsmen and military caste of the west coast of India; Pliny (*Nat. Hist.* vi. 21) refers to them as Nareæ. Their origin is still problematical, but it is generally held that they are a Dravidian people who have been modified by mixture with the Nambuthiris, indeed judging from photographs it is not always possible to determine to which of these two peoples a given individual belongs. They may have been among the first invaders of Malabar and consequently assumed



a dominant position. Mr. Thurston (*Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, vol. v. p. 284) refers to successive waves of different castes and tribes from the Canarese and Tamil countries; these settled down, "adopted the customs and manners, and assumed the caste names of the more respectable of the community that surrounded them. This process of assimilation is going on even yet. Chetties of Coimbatore . . . Gollas . . . from the north have similarly, in course of time, assumed Nayar customs and manners, and are now styled Nayars. Again the Rajas and Chieftains of the country sometimes raised individuals or classes who had rendered them meritorious service to the rank of Nayars. These men were therefore styled Nayars, but formed a separate sub-division with little or no communion with the rest of the Nayar class, until at least, after the lapse of generations, when their origin was forgotten. Nayar may thus at present be considered to be a term almost as wide and general as Sudra" (H. A. Stuart. *Madras Census Report*, 1891). Mr. M. Sankara Menon (*Census of India*, 1901, vol. xx. Cochin, Pt. I. p. 151) also believes in the mixed origin of the Nayars and suggests that there may be a Kolarian element in the population. When the observations on the physical anthropology of the inhabitants of the State are published we shall probably be in a better position to discuss the problem.

The Nayars are divided up into so many groups and sub-groups that it is not easy to define exactly what these are; on p. 97 we read that "Among the high caste Nayars, the recognition of caste by occupation is not possible. They were at one time a military caste . . . Among the lower classes of Nayars, there were sub-castes (potters, weavers, copper-smiths, etc.) . . . but the men of these sub-castes have abandoned their traditional occupations and consider it a disgrace to be known by their original occupation." It seems an undue extension of the term to describe them all as members of one caste, on the other hand there does not appear to have been sufficient solidarity among them to warrant their being termed a tribe as N. Subramaniya Iyer, following Bhattacharya, has done (*Census of India*, 1901, vol. xxvi. Travancore, p. 321). M. Sankara Menon however says (*l. c.* p. vi): "A number of *taravads* (matriarchal family groups) related together has all the features of a regular clan . . . Two or more clans having the

same social status are grouped into a *jāthi* or caste of later times, which has in its turn all the characteristics of a tribe... Thus, the Nayar community is even to this day divided into tribes, which are again sub-divided into clans and families." The Nayars may therefore be best described as simply a people.

There are two forms of marriage among the Nayars: the *tālikettu kalyānam* obligatory only on females, and the *sambandham*. The former or *tāli*-tying ceremony is compulsory on every girl before she attains maturity, though there is a tendency towards laxity in this respect now-a-days. The ceremony takes place every ten or twelve years, when all the girls down to the baby in the cradle must undergo it if they have not already done so. It is a formal affair, celebrated with complicated rites and much festivity. There may be a bridegroom or *tāli*-tier for each girl, or he may be married to all the girls. He may be of any age, but in the northern parts of the State and elsewhere a boy or boys are customary. On the fourth or fifth day the wedding dress is torn to signify the dissolution of marriage, the *tāli* may be removed then or later. In poor families the mother ties the *tāli* in the nearest temple. If the *tāli*-tier, of whatever rank he may be, wishes to take the girl as his wife he is at liberty to do so with the consent of her parents, in which case he has to celebrate the *sambandham* by giving her presents of cloth. It is also understood that till the severing of the cloth on the fourth or fifth day he has the right to cohabit with her. Every conceivable designation has been applied to the *tāli*-tying ceremony from a "formal marriage" to "a ridiculous farce". N. S. Iyer (*Census of India, 1901, Travancore* pt. 1. p. 328) quotes Sir T. Muttuswami Iyer who describes it as a religious ceremony "to give the girl a marriageable status... A ceremony which creates the tie of marriage only to be dissolved at its close suggests an intention rather to give the girl the merits of a religious ceremony than to generate the relation of husband and wife."

The second or real marriage, *sambandham*, good or auspicious union (also known as *guna dosham*, good and evil), is invariably accompanied by gifts of a cloth and money and is a quiet affair with the minimum amount of ceremony. The proper spouse for a young man is the daughter of his maternal

uncle (cross-cousin marriage). "The union is generally effected with mutual consent, but is terminable at the will of either party" (M. S. Menon *l.c.* p. 160).

There cannot be intermarriage between descendants of any female ancestor. A man may not marry the sister of his deceased wife. Among the high class people marriage is hypergamous, but endogamous for the low castes.

The Nayars are not only a matrilineal people, but they afford one of the most striking examples of that rare social condition, the matriarchate. We are probably safe in regarding this as a very ancient institution among the original Nagas, and in their case it was associated with another rare custom, polyandry.

Polyandry seems usually to be related in Central Asia with poverty and unfavourable conditions of existence, but this cannot be a determining factor in Cochin. Various circumstances here appear to contribute to this custom. In the first place there is the rigid organisation of the *tarawad* which, at all events in former days, relegated the husband or consort to the position of a negligible outsider. Mr. Anantha Krishna Iyer says that according to the orthodox view "the *sambandham* or *pudamuri* ceremony is not a marriage in the legal or sacramental sense of the term . . . The Nambuthiris do not look upon it as a marriage . . . The union may terminate at any time from wantonness, caprice or any other reason, and if the couple joined together by *pudamuri* were satisfied with one night of hymeneal bliss, there is no legal impediment to prevent separating without any formality on the following morning" (p. 35). "Further the person that begot a child in a *marumakkathayam* [*i.e.* matrilineal] female was originally regarded as a casual-visitor and the sexual relation depended for its continuance on mutual consent . . ." As a matter of fact "all or nearly all of the Nayars [now] cling to one wife for life, and with them *sambandham* is the real marriage, *de facto* and *de jure*. This is the real state of affairs in the States of Cochin and Travancore as well as in British Malabar" (p. 36).

Although the custom appears to have died out except perhaps in a few out-of-the-way places, there is no doubt that true polyandry occurred among the Nayars. Hamilton says that the women except those of high rank may marry up to twelve

husbands at one time if they please, "the husbands agree very well, for they cohabit with her in their turns, according to their priority of marriage, ten days, more or less, according as they can fix a term among themselves" ("A new account of the East Indies", in Pinkerton, *Coll. of Voy. and Travels* VIII. 1811, p. 374). The husbands were not necessarily brothers though they probably usually were. They in their turn do not seem to have been limited in the number of terminable marriages which they could make. Dr. Rivers has pointed out similarities between the marriage institutions of the Nayars and Todas (*The Todas*, 1906, p. 699). Evidently in olden days there was a system of more or less temporary marriage which was at the same time polyandric and polygynic, in other words it was a true polygamy, and this was the recognised method of increasing the membership of a *tarawad*. Mr. Anantha Krishna Iyer points out (pp. 36, 38) that the old state of affairs has passed away and the people are virtually monogamists, though there is still considerable diversity of opinion and practice.

The perpetuation of the inconspicuous position of a husband was probably strengthened by the military organisation of the Nayars. It is not desirable from a military point of view that warriors should be cumbered with the cares of a wife and family. This was acted upon by Zulu chiefs and by the Masai, though the latter recognised the frailty of the flesh by allowing young girls to live in the warriors' kraals. Polyandry among the Nayars was also fostered by the power of a chieftain of selling to a man the rights of a husband over another man's wife (p. 59), and especially by the teaching and practice of the Brahmans (p. 40). The Nambuthiri dominance threw on the subject classes a large number of wifeless males without any property of their own, but the Nayar social system was "admirably suited to their peculiar circumstances and urgent needs" (M. S. Menon, *l. c. p. x*), and they had every reason to conserve it as there is no restriction to the number of Nayar women with whom a man may be associated.

M. Sankara Menon believes that, judging from what still obtains among the non-Aryans of Malabar, Cochin and Travancore, the people of Kerala, as the whole district was called, were organised in tribes each led by a chief who took possession of lands by clearing waste ground, or by expelling or enslaving

the owners, the land being afterwards distributed among clans or smaller groups which co-operated in the work of clearing or of conquest; the tribes without landed estates obtained subsistence by different kinds of services to the rest. The government was in all probability in the hands of the *karavans*, or head men of families, there being no evidence of any monarchical constitution.

There is hardly any doubt, Mr. Menon thinks, that at least in the first half of the fourth century B. C. Aryans invaded Kerala. These were the Nambuthiris (Nambutiris or Nambudiris), who by temperament and training were quite a different kind of people from what their peace-loving, unobtrusive descendants have long since become. As Parasurâma, their accredited leader, was the bitterest enemy of the Kshatriyas it is improbable that members of the warrior caste accompanied him, therefore the Nambuthiris must have been fighting men and doubtless brought followers in their train. The Aryans were first repelled by the Nagas or serpent people, who were probably the ancestors of the Nayars, but later they overcame them, and it is an interesting example of the irony of fate that there is a serpent grove in almost every compound or garden occupied by high caste Malayali Hindus, and snakes are fed and nursed in the house of the "*Pâmbumêkât Nambûdri*" (M. S. Menon, *l. c.* p. 25). Finally came the time of social assimilation and national consolidation, but the abiding predominance of the Nambuthiris in the community was probably due as much to the occupation by force of arms as to their superior religion and civilisation. After the conquest they were settled by their leader in villages occupied by the indigenous agrarian peoples, who were subsequently classified as Sudras. To induce an idea of nationality the new-comers were prevailed upon by Parasurâma, among other things, to wear their tuft of hair in front instead of at the back of the head as in other parts of India. He also attempted with but partial success to assimilate to the Aryan system the many customs and practices which prevailed among the conquered.

In order to maintain the continuous purity of blood and stability of their families and to prevent their becoming weakened by the multiplication of impoverished branches, the rule is enforced that under ordinary circumstances only the eldest son of the Nambuthiris is allowed to marry and he must

marry one within the caste but outside his own family or *gotra*. Marriage is prohibited within six degrees when the common ancestor is a male and within six or four degrees when the ancestor is a female; conjugal relationship between first cousins is seldom practised, but when it is allowed a man marries the daughter of his maternal uncle after taking a ceremonial bath to indicate that all relationship with his cousin has ceased. Very often the absence of a son to the eldest brother and the necessity of providing the girls with husbands lead a junior member to marry into the same caste as the elder brother's wife, usually her sister. As a rule, however, the junior members enter into *sambandham* with young women of other castes below them up to the high caste Nayars. When a girl of vedic parentage, owing to poverty or other causes, is allowed to be married to a young man of the non-vedic class she loses her status. Polygyny is often indulged in partly to ensure having a son and partly to dispose of the superfluous number of girls. "Two or three girls are married to one man to avoid the payment of heavy sums which are required to get suitable bridegrooms" (p. 210). Polyandry and widow-marriage are absolutely unknown among them.

The relation between the Nambuthiris and the Nayars is a very interesting one and each community has been affected by the other.

Another interesting community is that of the Mappillas who are described in the *Census Report* of 1871 as hybrid Muhammedans whose numbers are constantly increased by the conversion of the slave castes of Malabar, which conversion Mr. Logan says "has had a marked effect in freeing the slave caste in Malabar from their former burthens. By conversion a Cheruman obtains a distinct rise in the social scale, and, if he is in consequence bullied or beaten, the whole Muhammedan community comes to his aid." They too have adopted many Hindu customs, for instance a *tali* is tied round the neck of a bride by her sister, and though inheritance is patrilineal in the Cochin State in North Malabar the Mappillas, like the local Nambuthiris, have adopted the matrilineal law of inheritance. "Curiously enough," Mr. Anantha Krishna Iyer informs us, "even among those whose inheritance is patrilineal the wife seldom lives with her husband in his own home, but on the

contrary the husband visits her as in a *marumakkathayam* family."

It is impossible to do justice in an Introduction to the mass of valuable information which Mr. Anantha Krishna Iyer has presented to his fellow-students, so I will content myself with a reference to the Black Jews.

One of the most interesting features of the ethnology of Cochin is the community of Black Jews, concerning whom there has been much controversy. There is no doubt that Jews came in early times as settlers, possibly according to some from Yemen, and that they intermarried with the natives. Dr. Redcliffe N. Salaman has recently shewn in a suggestive paper on "Heredity and the Jew" (*Journal of Genetics*, Vol. i. 1911, p. 273) that contrary to current opinion those physical characters which though difficult to describe are generally recognised as "Jewish" are (in Mendelian terminology) recessive when Jews mate with European Gentiles, whereas Gentile physical characters are dominant. Indeed so far as his observations go the Jew-Gentile hybrids conform to Mendel's law, and they "strengthen the view that complex as the origin of the Jew may be, close inbreeding for at least two thousand years has resulted in certain stable or homozygous combinations of factors which react in accordance with the laws of Mendel and which may explain the occurrence of the peculiar facial expression recognised as Jewish (*l. c.* p. 290). With regard to the Cochin Black Jews he says: "The Beni-Israel of India have been settled in India at any rate since 1400 of the present era, but traditionally from pre-exilic times. They are essentially a black people quite unlike the European Jew. They have always been looked down on by their white brethren in India and they have lived as the natives amongst whom they dwell, and with whom there is little doubt they have freely mixed. In the description of them given by Fischberg, he agrees that they are non-Jewish looking and dark skinned; he remarks, however, that every now and again a practically ordinary white skinned individual with Jewish features occurs amongst them. If, as is probable, the Jewish facial features are recessive to the native, then it is only what one should expect to find that the great majority of this isolated community are native-looking and that an occasional recessive should crop out from the mating of two hybrids" (*l. c.* p. 286). It is certain that race mixture has taken

place, and in the Jewish Encyclopædia article a very good account is given of how the Black community has been augmented by the addition of freed slaves belonging to the White Jews, and the conditions of admission are of interest. The absence of Levites amongst the Black Jews is almost certain proof that there can be but very little Jewish blood present. The tradition of Levite and Kohen exists in full strength to-day all over Europe, and there is every reason to believe that it is absolutely well-founded and that no man calls himself Levite or Kohen, who cannot in reality make good the claim. No Levite or Kohen according to Jewish law, may marry a stranger, a proselyte or the daughter of a proselyte, or a divorcee, the sect may therefore be regarded as of strictly Jewish descent. Its absence from the Black Jews is highly suggestive. The community of Black Jews is thus an interesting example of the persistence of social and religious customs long after they have ceased to have any racial significance.

It does not appear from the account of Mr. Anantha Krishna Iyer that the Black Jews have any peculiar customs or ceremonies which are not characteristically Jewish, but M. Sankara Menon (Census of India, 1901, XX Cochin pt. 1: p. 67), says: "The Jews of all sections have adopted a few customs peculiar to Hindus. Before going to the Synagogue for marriage a *Tali* is tied round the bride's neck by some near female relative of the bridegroom generally his sister". The tube, or *mezuzah* on the doorpost can be seen in London, and together with the kissing of the finger is an old orthodox custom still common among the Polish Jews.

The desire for sons, with which the custom of the Levirate among the Jews is associated, is not confined to Hindus or Jews. It is not clear whether the Black Jews themselves admit that this desire "is an outcome of the idea that the spirit of the dead would be made happy by homage received at the hands of the male descendants". Letourneau (*The Evolution of Marriage*, p. 265) says: "For the Hebrews, a much more practical people than the Hindoos, the levirate had only an earthly object that of keeping up the name or family of the deceased and all that belonged to it." The idea is tersely expressed in *Ruth* iv. 5, "to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance." Whatever may be the significance of the



levirate among other peoples, its occurrence among the Jews was not due to the idea of property in the widow but to the desire to establish the deceased brother's name and property and was only necessary if the deceased was childless. If the statement that the Jews (presumably the Black Jews) may be married before they "come of age" implies that they may be married before puberty, then we must regard this as a borrowing from Hinduism as there is no evidence that such a thing occurs in any other Jewish community. The breaking of the glass is universal at Jewish weddings and serves as a reminder in the midst of joy of the destruction of Jerusalem. Mr. Anantha Krishna Iyer has made a slip in speaking of the *Kethubah* as a commandment, it is merely a plain contract enjoining the husband to maintain the wife and mortgaging all his property as security for the return of her dowry should she be left a widow. It is essentially a document for the protection of the wife. Another variation from accepted usage occurs in regard to divorce and is quite contrary to the Talmudic and mediæval Jewish practice. If the Black Jews look upon the Great Day of Atonement as commemorating a national calamity they are in error as it was observed before any such occurred.

It is true that the Cochin Jews either Black or White have produced very little literature, but we can scarcely call individuals uneducated if they study Hebrew and can read and write the language though few may be able to read and write Malayalam.

If the Cochin Jews may not eat any species of fish they have gone far beyond the Mosaic food taboos, as "whatsoever hath fins and scales in the waters, in the seas, and in the rivers, them shall ye eat" (Leviticus xi. 9).

The accompanying illustrations also point to the foregoing conclusions: the Black Jews present few, if any, traces of Jewish blood, whereas in the photograph of White Jews these are readily discernible.

Students of Ethnology will warmly congratulate Mr. Anantha Krishna Iyer on the completion of his investigations on the customs and beliefs of the peoples of the State of Cochin, and they also would like to mark their appreciation of the

---

liberality of the enlightened Raja and Government of the State for entrusting the work to such able hands and for the excellent manner in which it has been published.

Christ's College, Cambridge. }  
*January 25th, 1912.* }

ALFRED C. HADDON.





68006



## CHAPTER I.

—:0:—

# THE SUDRAS OF COCHIN.

—:0:—

### A. THE HIGH CASTE SUDRAS (NAYARS),

THE NAYARS are an interesting caste of people, forming a considerable portion of the population of the Cochin State; they constitute the third and last of the honoured castes under the name of the pure "*Sudras of Malayala*". They were mostly nobles who engaged neither in handicraft, nor in commerce, nor in any other occupation but that of arms, which they always carried; and no one could be called a Nayar who was not of noble lineage. They were in fact the magnates of the rulers of Kerala, and exercised as much authority over their inferiors as their rulers did over them. They formed in ancient times a warlike race with military leaders and civil administrators of all kinds. Very much influenced as they are by modern civilisation, their customs widely differ from those of other people, in marriage, family and social organizations, as also in maternal filiation. These customs, which are primitive, are being tenaciously retained by them; and they are even now, as they have always been, a unique people whose customs may appear peculiarly strange to foreigners.

The word *Nayar*, which is the honourific plural of *Nayan*, is derived from *Nayaka*, which means a leader of the people; and the name, which in the widest sense at present includes a large number of sub-castes quite distinct from one another, may have been given by a class of Brahmans called the Nambuthiris<sup>1</sup> to the Nayars proper, who formed a military class in ancient times. Some consider it to be more correct to derive *Nayars* from *Nagas* (snakes or snake-worshipping Nagas or Scythians) from the worship of the Nagas or snakes which has been the characteristic cult of the community.

1. See account of the Nambuthiris,

According to *Kerala Mahatmyam*, the Nayers are said to be the descendants of the union of the junior members of the Namibuthiri families with the Devagandarva and Rakshasa women brought in by Parasurama from extra-terrestrial regions. The *Keralotpatti* regards them as the descendants of the Sudras who accompanied the Brahman immigrants from outside Kerala.

Origin and tradition of the caste.

Some consider that the Nayers came from Tibet where polyandry prevails, while others consider them to be a very early division of the Newars of Nepal. The mere existence of polyandry in Tibet is not sufficient to suggest a racial identity, nor is the form of polyandry prevailing amongst the Nayers the same as that found amongst the Tibetans; <sup>1</sup> but the marital relations, mode of inheritance and other customs, as well as the style of architecture of Nepal, closely connect them with the Nayers, and go to show a common origin. <sup>2</sup>

In the serpent worship of the Nayers, and also their matriarchal customs, others have found traces of a Scythian origin. It is said that the Dravidian languages retain a more intimate connection with the Scythian or Turanean tongues. Philology also comes in to support this view. It is said that Tamil and its cognate tongues were founded upon the ancient Asura or Dravidian speech, and this is strongly confirmed by the fact that the language of the Brahuis, a tribe on the borders of Sind, has been found to be closely allied to them. "The Brahuis' language", says Dr. Caldwell, "enables us to trace the Dravidian race to the southern confines of Central Asia, and that this country was the home of the Nagas to which race apparently belonged the founders of the Dravidian kingdoms." It may therefore be safely concluded that the Dravidians of South India were of the same stock as the Nagas of the North, and to these tribes of Naga colonists belonged the original serpent worshipping Nayers. <sup>3</sup> "The name Dravidian Races," says Friedrich Ratzel, "fits only the Tamils, Telugus, and Canarese of Southern India, remoter kindred of the dark aboriginal population to whom Aryan population brought the religion of Brahma, a high civil order and of course the opportunity of extensive intermixture. The selection of the term is connected

1. The Evolution of Marriage, Letourneau, page 80.

2. The Sun and the Serpent. C. F. Oldham, page 158.

3. The Sun and the Serpent, Chapter VII, pages 162-165.

with its use in the sacred writings of the old Indians, where it is applied to the old Kshatriyas on the east coast of the Deccan who had fallen to the rank of Sudras. As a rule, however, all are called Dravidians who are not Aryan or Semitic and speak agglutinative languages like Tamil. They are distinguished by their dark colour, Mongolian features, and smooth hair. "The nucleus of the Tamil race was indeed," says Grant, "devoted to the nomad life, the fundamental institution of Turanean existence, but the hypothesis of their close connection with the population of Tibet has not attained the rank of scientific certainty." <sup>1</sup>

The passage, quoted above, supports the general consensus of opinion, that the Malayalam language is an offshoot of Tamil, and that the Nayers are the immigrants from the Tamil country.

It has always been a matter of controversy whether Malayalam is the mother, sister, or daughter of Tamil. The popular opinion seems to be, that it is the archaic form of Tamil before it became a written language, and this corresponds with the information derived from the Greek writers that the country was known by the name of Limurike, Tamilike or Tamil country. <sup>2</sup>

Relying mainly on literary evidence, Mr. Kanakasabha Pillay has attributed a Mongolian origin to the whole Dravidian race of Tamils, among whom he includes the Nayers, but anthropometric results point otherwise. <sup>3</sup>

As has been seen, many distinguished authorities are unanimously agreed that the Nayers belong to the Dravidian race with no doubt a considerable admixture of Aryan blood, but the date of their arrival in Malabar cannot be accurately determined.

It is assumed by some writers that the Aryans were conquerors who reduced *Asuras* (Dravidians) to slavery. Whatever might have been the fate of the aborigines, the *Asuras* were not subdued by the Aryans, and never became their serfs or dependants, but were converted gradually to Aryan usages by a regular fusion. Bishop Caldwell supports this view and says, that the subjugation of the Dravidians by the Aryans is

1. *Races of Mankind*, Vol. III, page 359.

2. *Malabar Law and Custom*, Introduction, page 2.

3. *The Tamils*, eighteen hundred years ago.

not borne out either by any Sanskrit authority or Dravidian traditions; <sup>1</sup> but certain legends refer to conflicts between them and the Hindu colonists of later times, and these are said to have been led by Parasurama, and the Nagas from Pātāla whom they found in possession of the country. <sup>2</sup> The latter were not forced to divide the spoil with the Kshatriyas or warriors who elsewhere counterbalanced the power of the Brahmans, and obliged them to keep up a continual struggle in which victory alternated with defeat. These internecine dissensions gave the indigenous element a chance to recover itself by degrees, and finally gave birth to a military aristocracy called the Nayars. <sup>3</sup>

The Nayars of ancient times formed the chief militia in Cochin, Malabar and Travancore, and their valour and other fighting qualities evoked the admiration of foreigners, and inspired even the restless Portuguese poet Cameons, who described them in the following apt lines:—

The military character of the Nayars.

Poliar the labouring clans were named;  
By the proud Nayars the noble rank is claimed;  
The toils of culture and of art they scorn;  
The shining falchion brandished in the right;  
Their left arm wields the target in the fight.

One of the earliest accounts of the Nayars is found in the writings of Duarte Barbosa, who described them as men of noble descent, who had to be armed as knights by the king or lord with whom they lived, and who could not call themselves Nayars until they had been so equipped as to bear arms. They were generally sent to school at the age of seven to learn all manner of athletic feats and to enable them to use their weapons. <sup>4</sup> Their sinews and joints were so stretched and anointed with the *oyle sesamus* by skillful fellows called "Panicans," who were captains in war, that they became very light and nimble; and could "wind and twine their bodies" as if they had no bones. They cast themselves backwards and forwards, high and low, to the astonishment of the beholders, and the delight in their weapon was so great that they

1. Grammar of the Dravidian Languages, Introduction, page 102.

2. The Sun and the Serpent, page 107.

3. Primitive Folk, page 107.

4. A description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar by Duarte Barbosa, page 128—129.

persuaded themselves, that no nation could handle it with such skill and dexterity.<sup>1</sup> Such trained young men became the guards of some king or lord, and so faithful and obedient were they, that they had no hesitation to die for him when required. They were the greatest and worst enemies of the Portuguese, and did a great deal of mischief to them by sea. Some of them had a naked rapier or cutlass in their right hand and a great target in their left, made of light wood, some again were armed with bows and venomous arrows upon their shoulders; and while moving about, they made a great noise by knocking the hilt of the rapier against the target in order that they might be heard. Others carried long pikes, some peccus with the match readily lighted, and had the best locks that could be found in all Europe. They knew how to use them, and the Portuguese had no advantage over them. Wherever they went, they carried their arms both by day and night.<sup>2</sup>

"They went into battle almost naked, threw javelin with equal address backward and forward, and drew the bow with such skill that their second shaft often split the first. Their extraordinary agility made them the terror of every combat in forest or jungle. On the smallest provocation they prepared themselves for death, and having done so, one would hold his ground against a hundred. Those attached to the person of the prince made it a point of honour not to survive him."<sup>3</sup>

"The military dress of the Nayar is a pair of short drawers and his peculiar weapon is an instrument with a thin but very broad blade hooked towards the edge like a bill-hook or gardener's knife, and about the length of a Roman sword. The hooked instrument, the inseparable companion of the Nayar whenever he quits his dwelling on business, pleasure or for war, has no scabbard, and is usually grasped by the right hand as an ornamental appendage during the time of peace and used for destruction in war. When the Nayar employs his 'musquet' or his bow, the weapon already described is fixed in an instant by means of a catch in the waist belt, with the flat part of the blade diagonally across his back; and it can be

1. Johnstone in his relations of the most famous kingdom in the world, 1611.

2. Voyages of Linschoten to the East Indies,

3. Graul Reise nach Ost Indien,



disengaged as quickly whenever he drops his 'musquet' in the wood or slings it across his shoulders for the purpose of rushing to close encounter with this terrible instrument."<sup>1</sup>

Cavalry was unknown; there was only infantry. The soldiers wore a silk cloth wound round the head and carried swords, shields, lances and bows. The king had an umbrella formed of the leaves of a tree and fixed on to the end of a cane, for protection from the sun. There was no standard. When they were in battle, and one army was at a distance from the other, two ranges of a cross-bow, the king would ask the Brahmans to go to the camp of the enemy and tell the knights to let one hundred of his men fight with the same number on his side, when both the parties would go to the central space to do so. The fighting continued even for three days, when blows were given on the head and at the legs. After the death of some men on either side, the survivors were directed to return to their camps. If any more fighting was desired, the same course was adopted. Sometimes the king rode on an elephant, and sometimes the Nayars carried him. The pay of a soldier was four carlini a month, and in time of war half a ducat.

The Nayars whom the king received in his service were never dismissed, however old they might be. They received their pay and rations, and the king granted favours to whosoever had served him well. If, however, they were left unpaid for some years, some four or five hundred of the aggrieved would rise up and go in a body to the palace, and send word to the king that they would go away dismissed, because he did not give them food. The king would then beg them to have patience, pay them at once either the whole amount due to them or a part of it with a promise to pay the balance at an early date. The king generally satisfied them, considering it a disgrace that they should go away to serve under another ruler. Even in times of war they were not at liberty to touch any peasant, or eat and drink with him in his house without penalty. The king was bound to support the mother and family of any soldier who died in war. He also treated, at his own expense, any soldier who was wounded in battle.<sup>2</sup>

---

1. Abbe Dubois *People of India*.

2. *A Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar*, page 130-131, Duarte Barbosa.

Thus did the Nayers as a warlike race play a very important part in the history of *Kerala* during the middle ages. Their weapons and modes of fighting thereafter underwent many changes under the influence of the Portuguese and the Dutch, who introduced western arms and tactics into the then existing art of war, when also the Nayers proved equal to the occasion. Labourdanais, who distinguished himself in the storming of the little town of Mahe, bore the brunt of many a Nayar onslaught, and had therefore opportunities of forming a just estimate of their work. Major Munro, who was instrumental in the storming of that little town in 1761, met the Nayar troops in the field, and thus described their mode of fighting: "One may as well look for the needle in a bottle of hay as any of them in the day-time, they lurking behind the sand-banks and bushes, except when we are marching towards the fort, when they appear like bees out in the month of June besides which they point their guns well and fire them also." Dr. Buchanan, who under the orders of Lord Wellesley journeyed through Mysore, Malabar and Canara, spoke of them in the same strain. When Hyder Ali invaded Malabar, they committed terrible havoc on the Mysoreans. "The Nayers are the military class of Malabar," writes Col. Wilkes, who was struck with their pluck and agility. "They are perhaps not exceeded by any nation on earth in their high spirit of independence, but like all persons stimulated by that spirit without the direction of discipline, their efforts are uncertain, capricious and desultory." The last event in which they showed their military valour was in the rebellion of the Pychée Raja of Kurumbranad. With the fall of the Portuguese and the Dutch, and the conquest and annexation of Malabar by the English East India Company, the Nayers have almost lost their warlike characteristics, through successive generations of peace and have now become attached to the land. Even writing in 1855, Captain Drury contrasts the Nayar's effeminate disposition with the martial valour of his forefathers. He does not bear transplantation. He now prefers a quiet swing in the verandah or a lounge under a tree, chewing betel. Unlike his ancestor, he is becoming more and more domesticated. The Nayar population has greatly increased and a large majority of them are not very affluent; and among these physical deterioration is noticeable.

The Nayers, like other Malayali Hindus, are not lovers of towns, but generally live in detached <sup>Habitations.</sup> houses, with large compounds and good gardens. The strict customs of caste purity and impurity in former times made them desert places where they were liable to be polluted by the members of very low castes. They generally select the site of a house either on the margin of a fertile valley or ravine with bright green fields of rice in front. The entrance to their compounds, which are often somewhat raised off the ground by laterite or mud walls, is at some little distance from the main house, and consists of a door in the centre of a strong gate-way, which is the first that attracts one's attention as the dwelling is approached. The gate is quaintly constructed, and the surroundings are exceptionally neat and tidy. It is also essential that a stair or a ladder should lead up to it from the bank of a green level paddy flat, reminding one of the days when security of life and property depended upon one's own ability to laugh a siege to scorn; when a Nayar house was his castle, and when at the gate-way were posted retainers to keep watch and ward against enemies. Seats for them to rest on, right and left, both outside and inside, a solid quaintly carved door and lintel, a room above approached by a ladder from inside, with windows, or openings whence shots were discharged on lawless intruders, and finally a thatched roof, complete the characteristics of a gate house. Permission to build such a gate house was a rare privilege and had to be obtained from the rulers, but with a change in the old order of things, this restriction has, like many others of the kind, ceased to exist. The plan and other details of the structure of a Nayar house are determined in strict conformity with the principles of the ancient Hindu science of architecture based on astrology. <sup>1</sup> A compound or garden is first selected and measured out into a square plot and is then divided into four parts by imaginary lines running lengthwise and breadthwise through the centre or middle of it. Either the north-east or south-west portion is chosen for the site of a house, the former being preferred to the latter. The south-east corner is generally set apart as the family burial-ground. There are again special spots selected for the well, tank, cow-shed, serpent grove and the family deity. The selection of the site for the house is

1. Chandrika.

partly guided by the influence of the monsoon. In regard to the serpent grove or religious shrine, a square plot just in the middle of the south-west portion is considered the most auspicious. A typical Nayar house is quadrangular, with an open space (*mittam*) in the centre; the western portion of it is the granary, while the rest of it is partitioned into rooms. The northern portion comprises the store-room and the kitchen at the western and the eastern extremities, with the dining room in the middle, while the western and eastern portions are kept as open halls for gatherings on important occasions. The house so constructed must face the rising sun—the east—and yet rather inconsistently it is called the *patinjattupura* or the western roof or building. The reason of this is that the *patinjattu muri*—the central chamber or the honoured guest chamber in the house, sanctuary of the ancestors of its occupants—must be so placed as to admit of entrance through its doorway the sun's earliest rays. Behind one or more of the rooms above mentioned is a *chaippu* forming a kind of enclosed verandah room. Another type most commonly met with consists of a portico serving as a reception-hall, the other portions of the building corresponding in details, more or less, with the quadrangular edifice just described. The rigid adherence to the science of architecture is confined not only to the Nayars and other high caste-men, but also to the generality of the Native Christians and Mahomedans who, before construction, always consult some expert in the choice of a proper site and the formation of a ground plan of the house. Misfortunes or even calamities are often attributed to the violation of these principles, and very often a newly built house is either altered to remedy the defects or even pulled down. There are again houses, where the two types are combined. The huts of the poor classes consist generally of one or two small, dark and ill-ventilated rooms with a kitchen at one end, and a verandah either in front or on all sides of the main building. With the increase of population, and with the demand for more houses, the old notions and *sastraic* injunctions are being overlooked as a matter of necessity, and the old fashioned houses are displaced by those erected on sound sanitary principles. The wood-work of the buildings is solid and substantial, and is in some cases beautifully carved. The walls are generally of laterite, brick or mud, and roofs which till

recently were thatched are now being tiled with tiles of European pattern manufactured either locally or in Mangalore. In these days of comparative peace and security of life and property from marauders and free-booters, the necessity for massive structures has ceased to exist, and, coupled with this, the improved notions of architecture, derived from an easy intercourse with more civilised centres, the rapid progress of education, and with it a better knowledge of, and regard for, sanitation and hygiene, have wrought remarkable changes in the construction of buildings, so that a better class of houses, well built, airy, and commodious, is displacing the old ones with their small, dark and ill-ventilated rooms.

As part of the surroundings of the dwellings in the same compound, there are frequently seen a cattle shed, an excavated tank for bathing purposes, often full of fish and water lilies, a well so arranged as to admit of water being drawn directly from it to the kitchen, an out-house (*matam*) for the Brahman travellers or visitors, and, lastly, a small edifice for the family deity. The gardens surrounding the houses are adorned with mango and jack trees, immense bananas, groves of cocoanut and areca palms and various kinds of flowers. Thus, in most places, their houses, which are occupied by fine types of humanity, (well made men and shapely women), are situated beneath the grateful shade of magnificent avenues of trees.

Four hundred years ago, a Portuguese traveller, writing on the subject, remarks upon the Nayar houses as being scrupulously clean and neat. Without any exaggeration it may be said that they are proverbially so, and the women are either naturally endowed with a taste, or are trained from early childhood, to keep the houses and everything therein neat and clean. Those of the richer and middle classes are in these days furnished with articles of European manufacture, and all their domestic utensils, for daily use, are made either of bell-metal, copper or brass, all well cleaned and washed early every morning.

The furniture of the poorer classes is very simple; a metal pot with a spout, a few metal plates and saucers, a few metal pans of different sizes, a spittoon of brass, a few mats, a knife, a cot or two, a betel box, and a few wooden bins for grains, are nearly all the requirements of a household in this respect.

The house itself is called by several names according to the occupant's caste, that of an ordinary Nayar being a *veedu*

or *bhavanam*, while the man in authority dwells in an *idam*, and the Raja in a *kovilakam* or *kottaram*. A separate name for each *tarawad* or family is peculiar to this coast.

There are some superstitious beliefs entertained by the Nāyars as well as other high caste-men, in the selection of the site for a house and compound, the quality of the soil, the site of the tank, well, cow-shed, and the edifice for the family deity; and as an account of these will be of some ethnographic interest, it is given below :—

The best site should abound with milky trees full of fruits and flowers; its boundary should be of a quadrangular form, level and smooth with a sloping declivity towards the east, producing a hard sound with a stream running from left to right, of an agreeable odour, fertile, and of an uniform colour, containing a great quantity of soil, producing water when dug to the height of a man's arm raised above his head, and situated in a region of moderate temperature. The ground possessed of qualities directly opposite to those mentioned above is the worst, and that which has a mixed nature is of the middling quality.<sup>1</sup>

The site to be avoided is described in a special manner as follows :—That which has the form of a circle, or a semicircle, or containing three, five or six angles, or resembling a trident or shaped like the back of a fish, the back of an elephant, or a turtle, or the face of a cow, etc., situated opposite to any of the intermediate quarters abounding with human skulls, stones or worms, ant-hills, bones, slimy earth, decayed wood, coals, dilapidated wells, subterraneous pits, fragments of tiles, limestones, ashes, husks of corns and exposed to the wafted effluvia of curds, oil, honey, dead bodies, and fishes; such a spot should be avoided on every account:

In regard to colour and taste, ground with smell like that of ghee and with sweet taste is good for Brahmans; that with the colour and smell of blood and with an astringent taste, for Kshatriyas; that with yellow colour, smell of boiled rice and bitter taste, for Vaisyas; and that with dark colour, smell of toddy and taste of cow-dung, for Sudras.

There is also a test for the selection of a site by lighting a lamp in a hole. A hole measuring one cubit in depth,

1. Ramraz's essay on the architecture of the Hindus, London, pp. 15-17.

having been well plastered with mud, a saucer of unbaked earth filled with ghee and four lighted wicks is placed therein, for testing the quality of the soil. If the wicks burn brightly in all four directions, the ground is fit for all the castes including Brahmans and other caste-men. If the wicks do not burn, it will not suit any of the four castes.

If the house is constructed by a person in the month of Medam (April-May) he gets disease; in Edavam (May-June) he gets money and jewel; in Mithunam (June-July) there will be death; in Ashad or Karkadakam (July-August) he gets servants and jewels, but no beasts; in Chingam (August-September) friendship; in Kanni (September-October) loss of friends; in Thulam (October-November) death of his wife; in Vrishchigam (November-December) money and crops; in Dhanu (December-January) he will become a devotee; in Makaram (January-February) there will be fear from enemies and thieves, but the builder will know of profits from many directions; in Kumbham (February-March), danger of fires; in Meenam (March-April) gold and soils.

The following asterisms are auspicious for commencing a building:—Aswini, Rohini, Mulam, the three Uttarās, Mrigāsirsha, Swathi; Hasta, Anuradha. All days of the week, except Sunday and Tuesday, are auspicious. A house should be commenced at auspicious moments known as *muhurtas*: Sveda, Mitra, Mahendra, Gandharva, Rohini and also Raja Sāvitra. The erection of the pillars should be performed at auspicious *lagnas*, moments when the sun and the moon are favourable; other moments should be avoided.

Building operations should not be commenced in the rainy season nor at the end of the third part of the dark fortnight, and in the first and second part of the bright fortnight. Of the phases of the moon, the fourth, ninth, and fourteenth should be avoided. Tuesday is also to be omitted; for working on that day brings injury or bad luck. Days marked with dangers natural or any other, arising out of the earth, sky, or heavenly bodies and other calamities, such as the death of a friend, and those made ominous by the influence of some planets are considered inauspicious. A well informed person should do his work when the moon and the stars are favourable.

Auspicious times for  
the construction of houses.

Inauspicious times.



AZHUVANCHERI THAMBRKAL.





ADHYAN NAMBUTHIRIS.



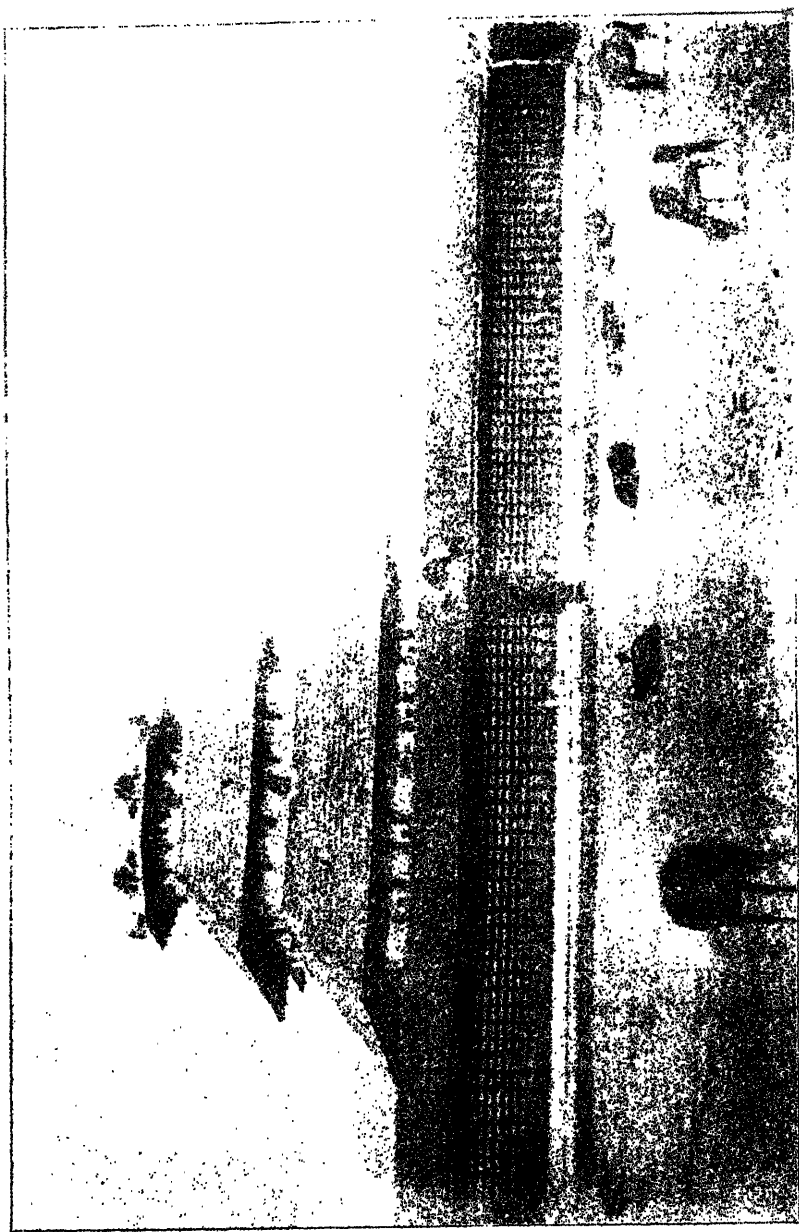
A NAMBUTHIRI LAD AFTER UPANAYANAM (INVESTITURE OF  
HOLY THREAD).



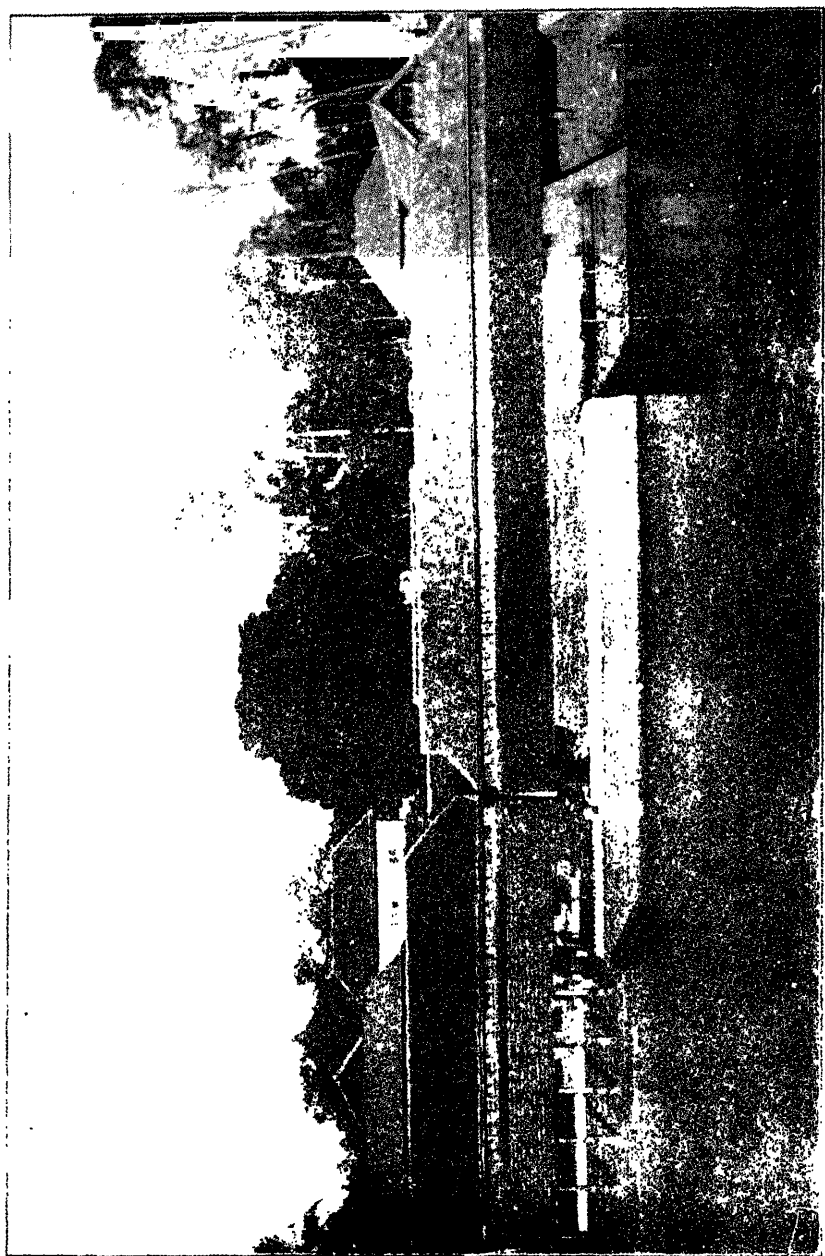
NAMBUTHIRI ADULTS AFTER SAMAVARTHANAM (TERMINATION OF STUDENTSHIP)



SRIVELI ROUND A TEMPLE.



PERUMANAM TEMPLE.



TRICHUR VEDIC COLLEGE (BRAHMASWAM MATAM).



A GROUP OF NAMBUTHIRIS.

The construction of a house on the left or back of a Vishnu temple, on the right of a Siva or Durga temple, or by the right side of a Sastha temple, will cause calamities to the occupants; but that on the opposite side will bring prosperity.

Houses should not be constructed near temples, paddy flats, hermitages, the sea, hills, or cow-shed; if constructed near temples, they should be lower in height than the religious edifices.

Houses, constructed on a dry-land (*paramba*) with an elevation to the north-west, will last for eighteen years; and if on an elevation towards the east, south and south-east, a hundred years; if, however, they are built on a ground with an elevation to the north-east, they will last for a thousand, if to the west, twelve years, and to the north, eight years. Houses built on grounds sloping to the north with *athi* (*Ficus racemosa*) near them, those sloping to the east with *araya* (*Ficus religiosa*) growing thereon, those with an inclination to the west, with *Perál* (*Ficus Indica*) growing thereon, and grounds with *ithi* (*Ficus Venosa*) are fit for the occupation of the members of the four castes.

The following trees, namely, *elanni* (*Mimusops Elangi*), or *perál* (*Ficus Indica*) growing on the eastern side of a house, *athi* (*Ficus racemosa*) or *puli* (*Tamarindus Indica*) on the southern side, *araya* (*Ficus religiosa*), *pala* (*Echites scholaris*) or milk plant on the west, *nága* tree (*Trichosanthes anguina*) and *ithi* (*Ficus Venosa*) on the north, will bring prosperity to the occupants. Jack and mango trees cocoanut and areca palms may grow on all sides of a house. *Arayál* (*Ficus religiosa*) growing on the eastern side of a house will cause it to take fire, while *perál*, on the western side will give cause for fear from enemies. *Athi* on the northern side of the house will bring on abdominal complaints to the occupants. *Aráyál* growing near a house must be cut off, unless the distance between the house and the tree be twice the height of the latter. A cow-shed may be erected either to the east or the west of the main building; and a similar one to the south of it for bullocks and buffaloes. There are certain ceremonies performed both at the commencement of construction and at its various stages, as well as before the occupation of a house, a detailed description of which will be found in the account of the Brahmins.<sup>1</sup>



Caste assigns to each individual his profession or calling ; and when once the system is handed down from father to son, and from generation to generation, it is found impossible for any person or his descendants to change for any other the condition of life which the law assigns to him. The most far-sighted and prudent men in ancient times probably found such an institution to be the only means for maintaining a system of civilisation amongst a people endowed with the peculiar characteristics of the Hindus.

The important principle which guided all ancient legislators was, that no man in the commonwealth should be left without work. At the same time, they knew that the people were indolent by nature. They were further aware of the fact that, unless every individual was duly provided with some work, for which he might be best fitted, the social fabric must necessarily fall to pieces. The law-givers therefore established durable and inviolable rules for the different castes constituting the Hindu race, the violation of which brings divine displeasure, and meets with severe punishment both in this world and in the world to come.

It is some such guiding principle that is involved in the division of the Nayers into various sub-castes. In Kerala the Brahmans seem to have been instrumental in the formation of castes to some extent ; for, it is found that some castes have to do services in temples to Brahmans. Distinct professional groups in the tribal organisations may have existed there before the advent of these people, who probably found it easy to make a ready adjustment of the social groups, and thought it advisable to assign to them well defined occupations. Therefore, the original institution of the caste system does not merit any serious condemnation.

Some are of opinion that it is not quite correct to say that the Nayers are a caste, and that it would be better to call them a tribe, as Bhattacharya has done in his 'Castes and Sects'. I am however inclined to think that the name is not quite appropriate, and that they do form a caste of people, known as Malayali Sudras.

In regard to subdivisions, there is no uniformity. So numerous and varied are they in Cochin, Malabar, and Travancore, that titles of distinction that have been conferred upon

certain families from time to time are being looked upon as sub-castes. *Jātinirṇayam*, a Malayalam work of some authority, which gives an account of Malayali castes, limits the number of subdivisions to eighteen, fourteen of which belong to the high caste Sudras, the remaining four being of low caste Sudras. In the last Census Report of the Cochin State, the same number is kept up with slight modifications, to which I am not inclined to agree. It is not possible at this stage to state the exact number of subdivisions, and the following are those that have come under my personal investigation in the State:—

1. *Kiriyattil Nayars*.—They form the highest of all the Nayar subdivisions in the Cochin State as well as south Malabar. The word *kiriyattil* or *kiriyam* is said to be derived from the Sanskrit, *graham*, which means a house. The derivation is doubtful. The members of this subdivision are believed to have been the descendants of the early Brahmans in their union with the Deva, Gandharva and Rakshasa women brought into Kerala by Parasurama, and their duty has been primarily to serve them. The members of the aristocratic class who still bear the titles of Panikkar, Kurup, Kaimal, Kartha, Menon, and Menokki belong to this class; in this class are included the old *nāduvāzhis*, and *desavāzhis*—rulers of *nāds* and *desams*—the military leaders, Pattola Menons and other *sthānis* or titled persons. Being superior to the members of other subdivisions, the *Kiriyattil* Nayars can cook for all others. The Nayars of this class are, according to current tradition, connected with the sixty-four families of Vellalas, whom Dr. Oppert has tried to identify with the Pallavas.

2. *Illattu Nayars*.—They are known in Cochin and South Malabar also as Sudra Nayars. They are par excellence the attendants and retainers of the Nambuthiris. In many parts of the State and in Malabar, they have, by close contact with the Nambuthiris, fashioned many of their personal habits after the truly Brahmanical style, and are, on that account, classed among the high class Nayars. Very seldom does a Nambuthiri woman go outside without being accompanied by a maid-servant or *dasi* belonging to this class, and every woman of this class is her constant attendant and is indispensable for her various ceremonies. They are, I understand, found very largely in Travancore also, where they form

the highest class. There are many who profess to belong to certain Nambuthiri *illams*, such as the Azhavancheri and other *illams*. They are obliged to be strict vegetarians owing to their service in the Nambuthiri families.

3. *Swarupattil Nayars*.—The members of this class render services to the Kshatriyas. There are, it is said, three minor subdivisions, namely, *Pindiánmar*, *Patinálwittukar* and *Chitayans*. The members of the first class serve as menials in the houses of Kshatriyas; those of the second have to supply them with everything necessary for the performance of all kinds of ceremonies; and those of the third serve them during pollution. They appear to correspond to the Chárnavar and Sudras. Swarupattil Nayars or Swarupakkár (from *swarupam*, princely house) are so called because of their service in princely houses or Kshatriya families. They are next in rank to *Illakkars*.

4. *Agattu and Purattu Charna Nayars*.—The Chárna Nayars or Chárnavar who are mostly immigrants from Malabar include the two subdivisions, Agattu Chárnavar and Purattu Chárnavar, "inside and outside retainers," respectively. There are two explanations of the terms. According to one, the Purattu Chárnavar are the armed retainers of the various chieftains, while the Agattu Chárnavar are the personal and domestic servants. According to the other explanation, the distinction refers to their position at *yágams* (sacrifices) at which it is said that various duties inside the *yágasala* or sacrificial pandal are to be performed by the Agattu Chárna Nayars, while the Purattu Chárna Nayars remain on guard outside. In point of social precedence, the Purattu Chárnavar are ranked superior to the Agattu Chárnavar, probably because the latter do not belong to any of the fighting clans. A woman of the former may mate with a man of the latter, but not *vice versa*. Only the men of the two subdivisions may eat together, but the women may mate with men of their own clan or of any other or with a Nambuthiri. The men of this class form *sambandhams* in South Malabar with the Kiriyaattil women. The caste-men affix the title of Nayar after their names. There are many of this class found in the State.

5. *Menókki and Pattóla Menon*.—Men of these castes serve as accountants in temples and in aristocratic families.

The above two subdivisions are mere titles and the members belonging to them are not numerous in the State.

6. *Márúr*.—The members of this subdivision act as drummers and musicians in temples and also render important services to Brahmans and Kshatriyas in their ceremonies.

7. *Pádamangalam Nayars*.—The members of this clan are engaged in escorting processions in temples. Some also act as sweepers in them. There are not, I am informed, very many in the State belonging to this subdivision.

8. *Pallichún Nayars*.—These are palanquin-bearers of the Brahmans and Kshatriyas.

9. *Vattekkád Nayars*.—They are the pressers of oil for use in temples. It has been remarked by some that the Vattekkád Nayars are not always admitted to be true Nayars and that in some places they are called Vániyans (oil mongers.) The subdivision is endogamous. There are two minor subdivisions, the members of which neither interdine nor intermarry.

10. *Chempukotti Nayars*.—These are the workers in copper for temples and Brahman houses. The following tradition regarding them is interesting :—

“Chempukottis or Chempóttis (copper tappers) are copper-workers whose traditional business is the roofing of the *srikóvil* or inner shrine of the temple with that metal. They are said to have originally formed part of the *Kammálan* or artisan community. When the great temple of Taliparamba was completed, it was purified on a scale of unprecedented grandeur, no less than thousand Brahmans being employed. What was their dismay when the ceremony was well forward, to see a Chempukotti coming from the *srikóvil*, where he had been putting the finishing touches to the roof! This appeared to involve a re-commencement of the whole tedious and costly ritual; and the Brahmans gave vent to their feelings of despair, when a vision from Heaven re-assured them. And thereafter Chempótties have been raised in the social scale, and are not regarded as a polluting caste.”<sup>1</sup>

11. *Otattu Nayars*.—They are the tile and thatch makers for temples and Brahman houses.

12. *Edachéri Nayars*.—They are the makers and sellers of dairy produce.

13. *Anduran Nayars*.—These Nayars are the manufacturers of earthenware for use in temples.

14. *Attikurusi Nayars*.—They are the priests who officiate at funeral ceremonies for all sub-castes above them.

In respect of the fourteen subdivisions of the high caste *Sudrás*, it must be said that the non-military classes, namely, the Otattu Nayars, Chempukotti, Anduran, Pallichán and Vattékád Nayars, have to be treated as an intermediate class of *Sudrás*, because there is neither interdining nor intermarriage between the members of these subdivisions and those treated as high caste *Sudrás*; but they are classed among the high caste *Sudrás* on account of their services in temples, which give them the privilege to enter them and bathe in public tanks.

Under the head of low caste *Sudrás* are included four sub-castes, namely Tharakans, Velakkathalavans, Veluthédans, and Cháliyans, who pollute other Nayars by touch, and who are on that account called low caste *Sudrás*. Pollution by touch appears to be the basis for the above classification, and on this principle, the three castes except the Tharakans are treated as low caste *Sudrás*; for, their touch pollutes all castes above them. The Tharakans had been a trading class, but they have now taken to other professions. They are a Tamil class and are the least Malayáli to be brought on a level with the high caste *Sudrás*, though in their customs they are almost like the latter. A similar process of assimilation has been and is still going on among some of the Tamil castes of the Chittur Taluk as well as elsewhere, by which the members of such castes are developing themselves into Nayars.

The Nayars affix to their names one of the following titles, the origin and significance of which are given below:—

1. *Kartha*.—The word means a 'doer', and appears to have been used as a title by some of the old Madura kings. The rulers of Cochin are said to have confirmed this title on some influential Nayar families, and made them petty chieftains subject to their paramountcy. All the Karthás belong to the *Illam* division of the Nayar caste. Among the old families in the Cochin State still possessing this title are Chéránellur Kartha near Ernakulam, Kódasséri Kartha near Chálakudi, and Kuzhupilli Kartha.

2. *Kaimal* (from *kai*, hand, meaning power).—The Kaimals were, according to tradition, the fighting masters of Cochin and Malabar. At one time, they were in charge of the royal treasury, which by respected custom could not be visited by the Rajas themselves, except in the presence of the Kaimals. "Neither could they", says Barbosa, "take anything out of it without a great necessity, and by the council of this person and certain others." They were also the chieftains or rulers of certain localities, owing a kind of allegiance to the ruler of the State. Many of the Kaimal families are still in existence, such as the Koratti Kaimal, Cherukayil Kaimal and others.

3. *Kurup*.—This is also a title attached to the names of many Nayar families and is also assumed by other castes. Some of them were military instructors (*Kalari Kurups*) in the old royal families of Cochin and in North Malabar. 1.

4. *Panikkar*.—The word comes from *pani*, meaning work. The Panikkars originally kept *kalaris* (fencing or gymnastic schools with a sort of private chapel attached to it) in Cochin, Malabar and Travancore. They are spoken of by the Portuguese writers as the strength of the country. They are no longer in charge of *kalaris* but are now engaged in other occupations. Some are experts in sword play.

5. *Nayar*.—The Pathináyirathil (10,000) and Muppathináyirathil (30,000) Nayars who constitute the forty thousand belonged to the Kiriya and Chárna castes. The title was generally conferred in Malabar by kings or feudal chiefs, but in the State it was mostly assumed by the Sudrás who had not received other titles.

6. *Menon*.—The word is a contraction of *mél*, above, and *avan*, he, and means a superior person. The title was given to many Nayar families or individuals by the rulers of Cochin. As soon as a person received this title, he was presented with an *óla* (palmyra leaf) and an iron style for writing thereon. This is symbolical of the profession of an accountant. Even now, in Cochin and British Malabar, each *amsom* or revenue village has a writer or an accountant who is called a *Ménón*. The title of *Menókki* means one who looks over or superintends, and is found only in British

---

1. Ethnographic appendices, page 131.

Malabar, where it is a creation of the Zamorin.

7. *Asán*.—The word means a teacher. He is also a head-man (*Karayinnél Asán*), who has certain social functions in connection with the marriage and other ceremonies.

8. *Achan*.—The word means father. It is the title of the Palghat Rajas, the ministers of the Calicut and Cochin Rajas (*Mángát Achan* and *Páliyát Achan*), and also of several other old Nayar chiefs.

9. *Mánnátiyar*.—This is the title of certain aristocratic families in the Chittur Taluk near Palghat. The word is derived from *man*, earth, and *nétiyavar*, earners.

Among the high caste Sudras marriage is hypergamous,

while the low caste Sudras are endogamous.

Marriage prohibitions. This is the general rule, though exceptions may sometimes be found. A Nayar is allowed to cohabit with a woman lower in the social scale than himself, but his womenkind are prohibited from exercising the same liberty. This is called the *Anulómam* and *Prathilómam*. Dr. Gundert derives *Anulomam* from *Anu* with *lómam* = *rómam* = the hair, going with the hair or grain. So *Prathilómam* means going against the hair or grain. According to this usage, a Nayar woman, consorting with a man of the higher caste, follows the hair, purifies the blood, raises the progeny in social estimation. By cohabitation with a man of lower subdivision, clan or caste, she is guilty of *Prathilómam*; and if the difference of caste were admittedly great, she would be turned out of her family to prevent the whole family being boycotted.<sup>1</sup>

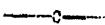
The rule of *Anulómam* and *Prathilómam* is everywhere observed with great strictness. In many cases, Nambuthiris, Embráns, Póttis and Tamil Brahmans, Kshatriyas and

1. Alliances between the people of North Malabar and South Malabar seem to be extremely rare. It is partly because of the principle of *Prathilómam* and perhaps partly that the Nayar women cannot cross the *Korapuzha* which marks the boundary between the two. Nor can the women of the extreme north of North Malabar cross the river between it and South Canara. The reason is said to be that the *Kelathéri Raja* so commanded owing to the fear that was entertained about their being captured and taken as wives by the Arabs. Similarly, till about fifty years ago the Nayar women from North Travancore and Cochin were prohibited from going beyond *Quilon* southward. These customs are being overlooked by the educated members of the community and it may almost be said that the custom has begun to die out.

Further, in the extreme south of South Malabar a high caste bride mates with a low caste bridegroom on the *Prathilómam* already explained. The husband cannot touch her without pollution, when she is engaged in taking meals. In the case of Nambuthiris, the same custom is in force and they cannot be seen, while engaged in religious ceremonies or taking meals. With the spread of education, official status, wealth, power, and influence, many of these time-honoured customs are fast disappearing.

Ambalavásis form alliances with Nayar women, but the latter and their children cannot touch their husbands and fathers without polluting them. The children of this union belong to the mother's family. In the clan system, descent was at first reckoned in the female line; consequently, uterine ties alone constituted kinship. The father was not regarded as related even to his children, and not considered as a member of the family. In this system all the children bear the clan name, and the clan name becomes the test of blood relationship. But the moment the descent is recognised through the male, the clan system breaks down. Among the Nayars the kinship is still reckoned through the female line.

Marriage is endogamous among the low caste Sudrás. The following restrictions are however in force among all classes of Sudrás. There cannot be intermarriages between the descendants of any female ancestor. It is strictly prohibited even in the case of two persons belonging to the same *taravú*d or family whose relationship cannot be traced to its origin, but is only traditional. A man cannot marry the sister of his deceased wife. The custom is more changing. A man cannot marry from the family of his deceased wife, but is now limited to the *thávvazhi* to which his wife belonged. Even this is now being overlooked.





## CHAPTER II.

—:0:—

### THE SUDRAS OF COCHIN.

—:0:—

#### A. THE HIGH CASTE SUDRAS (NAYARS)

(Continued).

According to Nayar ideas the most desirable bride for a young man is the daughter of his maternal uncle.

There are two forms of marriage in vogue among the Nayars, namely, the *Thdlikettu kalydnam*

Marriage custom.

(*tāli* tying ceremony), and the *Sambandham*

(the customary nuptial union of man and woman), the first of which is performed for every girl before puberty, and the second, the real adult marriage, is celebrated after she comes of age. The *tāli* tying for every girl is compulsory before she arrives at maturity,<sup>1</sup> and the omission or neglect of it will place her and her family under a ban; for, it is considered a religious impurity for a girl to attain puberty before the performance of this ceremony. There is however a tendency for these restrictions to be overlooked now-a-days.

In every *taravadd* or family, the ceremony is performed once in ten or twelve years, and all the girls down to the baby in the cradle, who have not already undergone this ceremony, are married in this fashion for the sake of economy. When, in a family, the *tāli* tying ceremony has to be performed for a girl or a number of girls, the *kāranavan* or senior member thereof, at a meeting of the friends and relatives of the family, sends for the local astrologer, who after examining the horoscope or horoscopes of the girl or girls determines the auspicious hour for it as well as for certain subsidiary rites

---

1. As a rule, the *tāli* tying ceremony is performed before the girl attains puberty, but sometimes it is performed afterwards. In the latter case, the girl is prohibited from entering temples during the period intervening between the attainment of puberty and the *tāli* tying ceremony.

which precede or follow it.<sup>1</sup> Information is then given to the relatives, and friends of the family regarding the performance of the ceremony on a certain date, when invitations are sent around to those that should attend the wedding. The ceremony then opens with a fixing of the post<sup>2</sup> for the erection of a pandal, which is tastefully decorated and in which the ceremony is performed. The male members of the village are invited and treated to a feast followed by the distribution of betel leaf, arecanuts and tobacco for chewing.<sup>3</sup> In the Cochin State, every time the ceremony is performed in a privileged family, or in one wishing to obtain privileges, a member thereof visits His Highness the Raja with presents (*thirumulkázhcha*), and requests his permission for the celebration. Similar presents are also made to the Nambuthiri *jenmies* by their tenants and others attached to the *illams*. It is interesting to note that certain privileges, such as sitting on grass mats, having a procession with an elephant, beating of drums, firing of pop-guns, worshipping of the Sun on a platform especially constructed, have often to be obtained from the ruler of the State.<sup>4</sup> Then follows the *Ashtamangalyam Vekkal* (procession to the marriage pandal to place the eight auspicious things, namely rice, paddy, tender leaves of cocoanut trees, an arrow, a looking glass, a well washed cloth, lighted fire, and a small wooden box called cheppu) which is a formal beginning of the ceremony, or if necessary, earlier still, and for which a *Bráhmāni* is invited. On the night previous to the ceremony, the girl neatly dressed and adorned in her best is taken by her caste-women to a reserved spot in the house (*Patinnáttu Iruttal*, seating on the western side), where some ceremonies are gone through, and the *Bráhmāni* or *Pushpini* entertains the party with her songs, chiefly *Purānic*. Soon after, the girl and the female members of the family, dressed in gay attire and decked with costly ornaments, come out in procession to the pandal where the

1. The village astrologer is entitled to be formally invited. He makes certain predictions at the sight of the messenger about the results of the marriage. When he arrives at the gate of the house, he is formally received, and he makes certain other predictions from the movement of the flame of a lamp as to the result, happy or otherwise, of the marriage. In the latter case, he suggests some remedies.
2. For this also an auspicious hour is fixed by the astrologer.
3. A few important members sit together and prepare a kind of list for the purchase of provisions for the feast and other expenses.
4. Such privileges are permanently enjoyed by certain aristocratic families. Some obtain them on marriage occasions.

same formality is again gone through. The girl has to sit with her face veiled. After going round the pandal, three, five or seven times, a cutting of the jasmine placed in a brass vessel is carried by the Elayad or family priest, who, mounted on an elephant with it, and accompanied by a grand procession with the beating of drums, a display of fire-works, and the joyous shouts of men and women, goes to the nearest Bhagavathi or other temple, where the plant and the *táli* (marriage badge) placed in a vessel are consecrated by the performance of a *pūja* by the temple priest. The party then return home with it. The night previous to the ceremony is marked by a feast called *Athāzham*. Next day, the girl who is again properly dressed and well adorned, is led to the reserved spot or the central chamber in which are placed a lighted brass lamp and a vessel full of rice. A short time before the auspicious hour, she goes round the pandal or shed three times, and is led on by the *Brāhmani* to the worship of the Sun (*Adithyane Thozheekal*). In some cases this is done on the bare ground, and in others in a shed provided with a ceiling of plank previously erected for the occasion. After this the girl is seated in front of the shed and somewhat on its western side. The bridegroom or the *táli* tier, who may be a Thirumulpad in the case of several girls, is invited and lodged in a house near the bride's family, where he and his friends are treated to a feast called *Ayal* or *Ayini Oonu*. A short time before the auspicious hour, the bridegroom, armed with a sword and neatly dressed, starts in procession with his party to the bride's house, where, at the gate, he is received by a few male members with *ashtamangalyam* in their hands and seated conspicuously in the pandal. In some cases, there is a grand procession from the bride's house to meet the bridegroom's party. A male member of the family, either the maternal uncle or the brother of the bride, washes his feet, and brings the girl, who is already gaily dressed and bedecked with ornaments, into the pandal, round which she goes three times. She is then seated on his left side, and the girl's father makes presents of cloths (*manthrakodi*) in which bride and bridegroom dress themselves, and after the usual distribution of gifts to Brahmans and the Elayad, the latter hands over the *táli* made by the village goldsmith, at the lucky moment mentioned

by the Kaniyán or local astrologer, to the bridegroom who with the sword on his lap ties it round the neck of the girl. She is then required to hold an arrow and a looking glass. When several girls have to undergo the ceremony, a single Thirumulpád performs it or as many Thirumulpads as there are girls. The Thirumulpad gets one to eight rupees for each girl. As soon as the *táli* tying is over, certain formalities indicative of the wife's duties (giving the bridegroom betel to chew, giving him a vessel of water to wash his feet and some fruits to eat, etc.), are gone through, and after this, the *táli* tier is allowed to depart receiving his fee for the service rendered by him. The account given above is that of the ceremony performed in the aristocratic families of the State. Among the Nayars in the northern parts of the State as well as in other places, the Kaniyan or the village astrologer examines the horoscope or horoscopes of the girl or girls and those of the boys of the families of their *enangans*, selects the boy or boys fit to tie the *táli* and determines the auspicious hour, when information is also given to the *kúranavan* of the boy's families regarding the proposal and a formal request to them to allow the boys to serve as bridegrooms. In the event of their willingness, preparation for the ceremony begins at once. The rites and the order in which they are performed differ in different places, and in different subdivisions of the same caste, but the general characteristics are the same throughout. In well-to-do families there is a *táli* tier for each girl, while in others, a young man is invited to tie the conjugal collar for one girl, and for others, the mother does it. The beating of drums, firing of pop-guns, the procession with elephant, and the worship of the Sun by the girl on a raised platform are all dispensed with. The other formalities except the *Bráhmāni's* song in some places are the same as those described above. Added to the jollity of the occasion are the vociferous and joyous shouting of the parties of men arranged for the purpose, as also a peculiar sound produced by the women assembled there.

The married couple are taken inside the house, and the ceremony is practically over. The *Karayinnēl Asān*, the headman of the village, plays an important part in the ceremony. In a conspicuous part of the pandal he is provided with a seat on a cot, on which are spread, a grass mat, a black blanket and

a white cloth, one over the other. His permission is solicited for the performance of the ceremony, and, with his consent, the *táli* is tied. He is paid four, eight, sixteen, thirty-two or sixty-four *puthans* (one *puthan* is equal to ten pies), according to the means of the family. He also gets some curry stuffs, betel leaves, arecanuts and tobacco. There is also at the time a grand distribution of *pán supári*, scented sandal paste, jasmine flowers to the women of the village and to the wives of the relatives assembled there. Then follows the feast to the guests assembled there, for which certain formalities are observed, with regard to the seats arranged for them; any violation of the social etiquette will result in the guests abruptly leaving the dining hall without partaking of any food. The women of the family and their relatives are first served. The women of the sub-caste as well as those of the village return home after chewing betel. The men of the same sub-castes and others are next served, then others lower in status to them, and lastly come in for their share the village barber and washerman. Provision is sometimes made to feed the members of the very low castes. In the meanwhile, what is known as *Pakarcha* (cooked rice, curries, sweets, etc., for the feasts) is sent to the families of relations. It must be said that the various preparations of the feast are boiled rice, vegetable curries, *páyasam* (rice boiled in milk) and butter milk, and the grandness of the feast is judged by the quantity of rice prepared for consumption, and other preparations are in proportion to it. The first day's ceremony and the feast thus come to an end. The ceremony however lasts for the next three days, but there is nothing of importance on the second and the third days, except some dancing and music by maidens inside the *pandal*. In some places, on the third day, the caste-men of the village are treated to a luncheon of rice and milk pudding and to varieties of amusements, such as the *Kathakali* and other performances.

On the fourth day, the caste-men are again invited. The married couple bathe in the neighbouring tank or river holding each other's hand, and are taken in procession to worship the deity in the village temple amidst the beating of tom-toms and merry shouts, after which the party return home. The bridegroom and the bride are taken to the kitchen, which they are prohibited from entering during the first three days, and there they dine together. After this, they proceed to the *pandal* where

the wedding dress is torn and given to the *Chithayan* which signifies the dissolution of marriage. In some places this takes place on the morning of the fifth day, and instead of this ceremony the *táli* tier is given a fee of eight annas and is dismissed with some presents, and in others the cloth is severed into two parts and each part given to the bridegroom and the bride separately in the presence of *enangans* and other friends. Throughout South Malabar, the severing of the cloth on the fourth day is indispensable and is part of the ceremony, while, in this State, it is said that the custom is not now in vogue. The marriage badge is not removed soon after the divorce, but is worn by the girl till the twenty-eighth day. Some remove it on the fourth or the fifth day, while others wear it for a week.

In poor families, where this ceremony cannot be performed on a large scale, the girls are taken to the nearest temple, and the *táli* is tied by the mother with neither feasting nor merriment. In some cases very poor people take their girls before the deity in the *Trikkákkarappan* temple and tie the *táli*, and very often do such people perform the ceremony on the *Onam* day in front of the clay image (*Maháddévar*) placed in their court-yard.

Where the Thirumulpád is the *táli* tier, he goes through the ceremony for a number of girls, and on receipt of the fee for his service to each girl, he departs in peace. If the *táli* tier, whether a Kshatriya or a young man of the *enangu*, wishes to take her as his wife, he is at liberty to do so with the consent of her parents; and in that case he has to celebrate the *sambandham* by giving her presents of cloth.

In South Malabar and the Cochin State, the general belief among the Nayars is, that the bridegroom has a right to marry her if he wills, and the severing of the cloth shows the dissolution of the marriage tie, which gives her the liberty to choose anybody else as her husband. It is also understood that, with the tying of the *táli*, the virginity ceases, and he who brings or takes her to that stage has a right to cohabit with her, which he relinquishes on the fourth day of the *Tálikettu kalyánam*. Further, the woman observes a sort of pollution for fifteen days for the death of the man who tied the *táli*, which proves that he is her husband. In some parts she merely bathes, and even this has been of late given up.

The following is given to be the explanation of the ceremonial :—There is very little difference between the *Tálikettu*

*kalyānam* of the Nayars and the marriage ceremony among other Hindus. All available evidence unmistakably points to the conclusion that the former is, in intention, if not in effect, the actual marriage ceremony of the Hindus. The ceremonials in the two cases differ very little; there is, however, one exception, namely, that in the case of Brahmans and others, vedic *mantrams* are recited, while the Nayars are compelled to substitute Brahmani *pattu* (song), which should be uttered in the *Rig védic swaram*. Ever since the institution of this system of marriage in Kerala, these songs have been in existence, and they invoke the blessings of numerous children for the pair. It must also be noted that, among all Brahmans, the wedding ceremony is divided into two parts, namely, the first in which the ceremonials form the chief feature, known as betrothal, and the second, popularly known as consummation or the real marriage. In the case of Nayars and other *marumakkathayam* Hindus, the *tali* tying ceremony for a girl, which is performed before the first sign of menstruation, refers to the betrothal, and the *sambandham* to the real marriage. There is this important difference that, while the Brahmans perform the ceremony after the selection of a husband and postpone the union of the couple to a future date, the *marumakkathayam* people perform the ceremony first and select the husband on the second occasion, i. e., when the girl is fit to be united to her husband. Hence the bridegroom in the first ceremony acts the part of a vicarious husband. But when the husband is ready at hand, it is not unusual for the girl to be actually married on the occasion of *tali* tying. The reason for this departure may have been due to the scarcity of suitable young men in the old troublous times and the consequent difficulty of securing a proper husband for every girl before puberty and the danger of girls being out-casted in default of it. Hence it is that the early legislators have devised this convenient plan to allow every girl to be married in a sense with the necessary religious ceremony, and enable her to remain unmarried for life without being subject to excommunication from caste. This view is supported by the fact, that the Nayars were, till towards the close of the eighteenth century, a fighting race and that there was a great loss of lives in the wars with neighbouring principalities and tribes. As in other matters the letter of the law has been closely followed, without a corresponding adherence to its spirit.

The Brahmanical explanation, though palpably inadequate, is, that marriage is a sort of sacrament of which every maiden must partake in order that she may cleanse her own being from the taint of original sin, accomplish the salvation of her father and her ancestors, and bring forth a son to carry on the domestic worship (*Sacra privata*) of her husband's family. The Brahmins who observed this either imposed this principle on the Nayers, or the Nayers borrowed it from them in the belief that it would lead to social distinction.

Looking on this form of marriage in use, they are not regarded as constituting a religious ceremony or a *samskára* or sacrament in the Hindu or European sense of the word. "There is no officiating priest in attendance, there is no formula to be repeated, there is no *vedic*, *puranic* or religious chant or exhortation, and there is no formal benediction. The essential elements of a Brahmanical marriage, viz., taking the bride by the hand or *Pánigrahanam*, the walking of seven steps or *Saptapáti*, and the *hómam* or sacrifice to the fire, are not to be found among its details. Therefore the marriage customs among *marumákkatháyam* Hindus have no connection with their religious observances such as exists under ordinary Hindu law though several of the details bear a resemblance to a portion of the marriage ritual of the Nambutiris."<sup>1</sup>

The *Thirandukuli* is a celebration when a girl reaches the age of maturity. When a girl comes of age, she is lodged in a separate room where a lamp is lit and a brass pot with a bunch of cocoanut flowers is kept. She has to keep with her a circular plate of brass with a handle, called *váikannáti*, literally a looking glass with a handle. The event is proclaimed by a *Kurava* (shouts of joy by women). The women of the neighbouring families, and those of friends and relations visit her, and some of them make presents of cloths. On the third day, the villagers, friends and relatives are treated to a luncheon of rice and milk pudding. Early in the morning of the fourth day, the Mannáns or Vélans (washermen) appear. The girl is anointed with oil, and the tender leaves of the cocoanut palm are tied round the head and loins. In the company of maidens she leaves the room and the Vélans entertain the party, who soon move on in procession to a neighbouring tank where she wears the cloth washed by a washerman. Then

Puberty customs (Thirandukuli).

1. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, page 87.



she bathes with her friends. The same party return home in procession, when the *Bráhmāni* entertains the party with her music. In the afternoon, the girl is seated in a pandal put up in front of the house, where the Vélans continue the songs, which are *Puranic*, and the assembled guests who are chiefly the women of the village as also those of their friends and relatives present the washerman, each with a piece of cloth. They are entertained at a sumptuous feast held that day; after which the assembled party break up, taking leave of the host. In some places, the girl is taken to a separate house on the fourth day for the bath; whence she returns to her house in procession together with the beating of drum and joyous shouts. In the northern parts of the State, the Vélans' songs are at night, and the performance of the ceremony is compulsory on the fourth day. In the southern Taluks it is often put off to a convenient day, before the completion of which, the girl is prohibited from entering into the kitchen or going to the temple for worship.

The second or real marriage is the *Sambandham* (the customary union of man and woman), which  
*Sambandham.* is the principal word denoting the conjugal relations among the Nayars. It is said that there are seven forms of this marriage prevailing in Malabar, of which only two or three are in vogue in the State. The customs connected with each of the latter differ in different places: nevertheless the main features are the same all over. The best form of *Sambandham* among the Nayars is that between the daughter of a maternal uncle and his nephew; but, as a rule they enjoy very much greater freedom of choice than other classes of people. The parents or friends of the bride or bridegroom make the proposal, and the wishes of the *káranavans* of the two families are invariably consulted after the examination and agreement of their horoscopes. If the parties agree, an auspicious day is fixed in consultation with the astrologer. A few of the caste-men of the village and the friends of the bridegroom meet together in his house, and they all go in a sort of procession to the bride's house where they are properly welcomed and seated in a conspicuous part of the house. A portion of the *Rámáyanam* or other sacred book, referring to marriage and the happy conjugal life attending it, is then read by the *Asán* or village school master. Some music is also provided for the entertainment of the assembled guests who

are treated to a sumptuous dinner, and at the auspicious hour the bridegroom and his party proceed to a conspicuous part of the house, where a seat is specially provided for him. On either side of the seat and a little in front of it, are placed two lighted lamps. There the bridegroom and the bride make obeisance to the *káranavans* and other elderly men present there, distribute presents of money to the Brahmans who pronounce their benediction upon the conjugal pair. The bridegroom or his *káranavans* in the northern parts of the State give her the wedding dress in which she is dressed. The bride is then ushered in, either by her mother or by an elderly member of the family when cloths are given to the bride by the bridegroom. In some places the bridegroom and his party chew betel leaf and nut, while they chat with the women. After a while, the party begins to break up, one by one, wishing the couple all happiness, and the women, departing one by one, leaving the couple alone, one of them closing the door from outside. About daybreak, next morning, the bridegroom departs from the house, leaving under the pillow a sum of money according to his means. The *samthandham* is now complete. The woman resides in her family, and her husband visits her there. A few days after this, the bridegroom's mother or some senior woman of his family sends some cloths including *pávu mundus* (superior cloths) and *thóortha mundus* (towels) and also some gingelly oil for her use during the next six months. Every six months, she does the same, and on the festivals of *Onam*, *Vishu* and *Thíruvithira* she is given a little money, arecanut, betel, tobacco and banana. Before long the women of the bridegroom's family express their wish to see her, and have her brought to their family by a few women of the former. She stays there for a few days and is sent back to her own house with presents of ornaments and clothes from senior women of the house. After this she is at liberty to visit her husband's house on any day, auspicious or inauspicious.

In the Chittur and Talapilly Taluks of the State as also in the Palghat Taluk of South Malabar, this form of marriage is called *Kidakkóra* or *Kidakka, kalyánam* (the bed chamber ceremony). As part of this ceremony, a declaration is made by one of the bridegroom's party to the senior female of the bride's house in the presence of the assembled guests in the following terms:— " Let this youth visit this damsel for

six months," and a reply is given in the terms "Be it so". Thus, the permission of the senior lady of the bride's family is asked and given to the bridegroom to visit the bride for a period of six months.

The young men of some aristocratic families who wish to perform *sambandham* have the brides brought to them on an auspicious day without any formal ceremony, and henceforth look upon them as their wives.

The union is generally effected with the mutual consent, but is terminable at the will of either party. Practically, a marriage thus effected is, in the majority of instances, found as happy and enduring as others more formal and ceremonial.

The following is the account given by the late Mr. Chāndu Menon of the ceremonies constituting the marriage among the Nayars of Malabar. It is quoted here, because it is a typical description which covers all forms of the union :—

"*Sambandham* is the principal Malayalam word as *vivāham* is in Sanskrit. Whatever may be the *sambandhams* of the *marumakkathūyam* Nayars, there can be no doubt that the idea which the word conveys to a Malayali is the same as the word *vivāham*. The generic term, *sambandham*, which, in South Malabar between Calicut and Nedunganad, and in Ponnani, Cochin, and parts of Travancore, is the old name to denote marriage includes—

1. *Guna dōsham* as used in South and North Malabar.
2. *Pudamuri* or its Sanskrit synonym for *Vastradūnam* used in South Malabar.
3. *Uzhamporukkuka*, and *Vidūram Kairuga* of North Malabar.
4. The *Kidakkōra kalyānam* of Palghat and parts of Nedunganad.

*Pudamuri*, *Vastradūnam*, *Uzhamporukkuka*, *Vidūram Kairuga* are local expressions hardly understood beyond the localities in which they are used, but there would hardly be a Malayali who would not really understand what is meant by *sambandham thudānguka* (to begin *sambandham*). The meaning of this phrase which means "to marry" is understood throughout the Keralam in the same way, and there cannot be any ambiguity about it.

It is thus found, that *sambandham* is the principal word denoting marriage among the *marumakkathūyam* Nayars. It

will also be found on a close and careful examination of facts; that the principal features of this *sambandham* ceremony all over Keralam, are, in the main, the same. As there are different local names denoting marriage, so there may be found local variations in the performance of the ceremony. But the general features are more or less the same. For instance, the examination, prior to the betrothal, of the horoscopes of the bride and bridegroom to ascertain whether the stars agree astrologically, the appointment of an auspicious day for the celebration of the ceremony, the usual hours at which the ceremony takes place, the presentation of the *dānam* (gifts) to the Brahmans, the sumptuous banquet, the meeting of the bride and bridegroom, are the features which will invariably be found in all well conducted *sambandhams* in all parts of Keralam alike. But here I would beg to state, that I should not be understood as saying that each and every one of the formalities above referred to are gone through at all *sambandhams* among respectable Nayars, and I would further say, that they ought to be gone through at every *sambandham*, if the parties wish to marry according to the custom of the country. I would now briefly refer to the local variations to be found in the ceremony of *sambandham*, with the particular incident attached to certain forms of *sambandham* in South Malabar. I shall describe the *Pudamuri* or *Vastradānam* as celebrated in North Malabar, and show how the other forms of *sambandham* are related to it. I consider the *Pudamuri* form the most solemn and the most fashionable in North Malabar. The preliminary ceremony in every *Pudamuri* is the examination of the horoscopes of the bride and bridegroom by an astrologer. This takes place in the house of the bride in the presence of the relations of the bride and the bridegroom. The astrologer, after examination, writes down the results of his calculation on a piece of palmyra leaf with his opinion as to the fitness or otherwise of the match, and hands it over to the bridegroom's relations. If the horoscopes agree, a day is then and there fixed for the celebration of the marriage. This date is also written down on two pieces of cadjan, one of which is handed over to the bride's *kāranavan* and the other to the bridegroom's relations. The astrologer and the bridegroom's party are then feasted in the bride's house, and the former also receives presents in the shape of money or cloth, and this preliminary ceremony is invariably performed

at all *Pudamuris* in North Malabar. It is called *Pudamur Kodukkal* (giving pieces of cloth for dressing), and it is unknown in South Malabar.

Some three or four days prior to the date fixed for the celebration of the *Pudamuri*, the bridegroom visits his *kāranavans* and elders in caste to obtain formal leave to marry. The bridegroom on such occasion presents his elders with betel and nut, and obtains their formal sanction to the wedding. On the day appointed, the bridegroom proceeds after sunset, to the house of the bride, accompanied by a number of his friends. He goes in procession, and is received at the gate of the house of the bride's party, and is conducted with his friends, to seats provided in the *tekkini* or southern hall of the house. There the bridegroom distributes presents (*dānam*s) or money gifts to the Brahmans assembled. After this, the whole party is treated to a sumptuous banquet. It is now the time for the astrologer to appear and announce the auspicious hour fixed. He does it accordingly and receives his dues. The bridegroom is then taken by one of his friends to the *patinjattu* or principal room of the house. The bridegroom's party has, of course, brought with them a quantity of new cloths and betel leaves and nuts. The cloths are placed in the western room of the house in which all religious and other important household ceremonies are usually performed. This room will be decorated and turned into a bed room for the occasion. There will be placed in the room a number of lighted lamps and *ashtamangalyam* which consists of eight articles symbolical of *mangalyam* or marriage. These are rice, paddy, the tender leaves of cocoanut trees, an arrow, a looking-glass, a well-washed cloth, lighted fire and a small round wooden box called a *cheppu* made in a peculiar fashion. They will be found placed on the floor of the room aforesaid as the bridegroom enters it. The bridegroom with his best man enters the room through the western door accompanied by the bride's aunt or some other elderly lady of her family. The bride stands facing east with the *ashtamangalyam* and lits up lamps, and the head and shoulders of the bride and bridegroom are touched, and the bridegroom immediately leaves the room, as he has to perform another duty. At the *tekkini* or southern hall, he now presents his elders and friends with cakes and betel leaves and

nuts, which are also given to all the persons assembled at the place. After the departure of the guests, the bridegroom retires to the bed room with the bride.

This is an unvarnished account of a *Pudamuri*. Next morning *veetil kettu* or *salkaram* ceremony follows, and the relations of the bridegroom take the bride to the husband's house, where the bride's party are treated to a grand feast".<sup>1</sup>

The *sambandham* or *Pudamuri* ceremony is not a marriage in the legal or sacramental sense of the term. The views of the members of the orthodox community in Malabar, who are the expounders of the existing customs, are of great ethnographic importance. It is said that the Nambuthiris consort with Nayar females by *sambandham*, and precisely the same ceremony is gone through whether the husband is a Nambuthiri or a Nayar. The Nambuthiris do not look upon it as a marriage. Where a Brahman is a bridegroom, he cannot eat with his Sudra wife, and is therefore unable to join with his wife in the wedding feast. There is no comparison of horoscopes. The aristocracy of the District of Malabar, the Rajas who are admittedly the heads of the Nayar caste, and the Nambuthiris who are the expounders of religion, opine, that chastity is not one of the duties prescribed for the Nayar community and *slokas* (verses) are quoted to prove this. This view is not held in the Cochin State.

In the Malabar Marriage Commission, one hundred and ninety-seven witnesses admitted the undoubted fact that either party to the union may terminate it at any time from wantonness, caprice or any other reason, and that if the couple joined together by *Pudamuri* were satisfied with one night of hymeneal bliss, there is no legal impediment to prevent their separating without any formality on the following morning. Ninety-one witnesses alleged some formality to be necessary, and that parties should not separate without the approval of their *kāranavans* or of their relatives or of their caste people. There was also a small minority (twenty-one witnesses) who denied to the women the right of divorce which they accorded to man, assigning as their reason, that, under the Hindu Law, no woman can be independent. This minority would deprive

1. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, pages 35-37,

*marumakkathāyam* of its one great merit, *viz.*, that in sexual matters it places the man and the woman on terms of equality giving equal freedom to both. With practical unanimity, the witnesses admitted that the man may turn away the woman, and that under the *marumakkathāyam* law, he is in no way responsible for the maintenance of the children whom he has begotten upon her. Further, the person that begot a child in a *marumakkathāyam* female was originally regarded as a casual visitor and the sexual relation depended for his continuance on mutual consent.<sup>1</sup>

The views expressed above are those of the landed aristocracy, and the rulers who were admittedly of the Nayar caste, as also those of the somewhat selfish class of the Nambuthiris, of Malabar, who, to gratify their selfish ends, quote chapter and verse, of their own creation in support of the existing custom and teachings, which the Nayars of these days will never submit to. All or nearly all of them cling to one wife for life, and with them *sambandham* is the real marriage, *de facto* and *de jure*. This is the real state of affairs in the States of Cochin and Travancore as well as in British Malabar. The present and growing tendency in all cases, in which, a man, whether a Nambuthiri or a Nayar, consorts with a Nayar woman, is to look upon her as the true wife, and the children of such unions are looked upon as theirs and duly provided for, so far as their means permit. The statement is to a certain extent confirmed by Mr. Logan, who was the Collector of Malabar for many years and thus had ample opportunities of knowing a great deal of Malabar and its people. He says, "this part of Malabar has, in the hands of unenquiring commentators, brought much undeserved obloquy on the morality of the people. The fact, at any rate, of recent years, is that, although the theory of the law sanctions freedom in these relations, conjugal fidelity is very general. Nowhere is the marriage tie, albeit, informal, more rigidly observed or respected, nowhere is it more jealously guarded or its neglect more savagely avenged. Their very looseness of the law makes the individual observances closer, for people have been watchful over the things they are most liable to lose. The absence of a ceremonial has encouraged the popular impression, but a ceremonial,

1. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, pages 38 to 44.

like other conventionalities, is an accident, and the Nayar women are as chaste and faithful as their neighbours, just as they are as modest as their neighbours, although their national costume does not include some of the details required by conventional notions of modesty.”<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the existing state of things in the community does not quite satisfy the sentiments of the educated public. There was a loud cry for reform and legislation in British Malabar. The Madras Government appointed a commission, which, after its protracted labours, enacted a permissive law, Act IV of 1896. The main provisions of the Bill are, that, when a *sambandham* has been registered, it shall have the incidence of a legal marriage; that is to say, the wife and children shall be entitled to maintenance by the husband or father respectively and to succeed to half his self-acquired property if he dies intestate, while the parties to such a *sambandham* cannot register a second one during its continuance. The law does not extend to this State. The fewness of the number of marriage registrations shows how little the Nayars, as a community, have availed themselves of it. The principal objections urged against it are: (1) that it ignores caste and customary restrictions on marriage and thereby interferes with caste; (2) that it sanctions what according to social usage is deemed to be incestuous marriage; (3) that marriage before the Registrar is obnoxious to the people, and that no one has any scruples about going through the customary form; (4) that the provisions relating to divorce are ill-adapted to the present state of society in Malabar, and that revelations of conjugal infidelity in public courts are the most repulsive to the people; (5) that the provisions relating to the giving of the whole of the self-acquired property to wives and children amount to violent interference with the customary law. The following extract from Moore’s Malabar Law and Customs is well worth the perusal<sup>2</sup>:—

From the date on which the Act in Malabar came into force up to 31st March 1910, one hundred *sambandhams* have been registered. “In his last report of the working of the Act, the Registrar-General states, that the number of notices of

1. Logan’s Manual of Malabar, Vol. I, page 136.

2. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, page 95.



intentions to register *sambandhams* was thirty-six in 1896—97, twenty-four in 1897—98 and only fourteen in 1898—99. " He accounts for the falling off as follows :—

The mass of the people continues to regard the marriage law with aversion and suspicion, and even the educated members of the community who are in favour of the measure, shrink from taking advantage of it from fear of offending the elderly members of their *tarawadds*, and all the powerful Nambuthiris and other great landlords. The Registrar of Calicut also points out, that the power conferred by the marriage law, to make provision for one's own wife and children, has hitherto acted as some inducement to persons to register their *sambandhams*, but as Act V of 1898 (Madras) which came into force from 2nd September 1898, enables the followers of the *marumakkathayam* law to attain this object without registering their *sambandhams*, and "unnecessarily curtailing their liberty of action, and risking the chances of divorce proceedings," he thinks it unlikely that registration under the marriage law would increase in future.

Among the Nayars of ancient times in Cochin, Malabar and Travancore, there was polyandry. In the report of the Malabar Marriage Commission, it is said, that there is evidence to show that it still lingers in Ponnani and Walluvanad Taluks, especially on the Cochin border of the former Taluk.<sup>1</sup> Apart from its existence in former times, it may be said that nowhere in these States is the custom still found to linger, no admitted instance of it has come to my notice in the course of my investigations into the customs and manners of the castes in the various parts of the State. An account of these customs as it existed in ancient times, and the theories that have been advanced in respect of it are of some ethnographical importance, and it may not be out of place here.

The Nayars of ancient times were, in most cases, neither regularly married, nor did they care much, when married, to support their wives and children ; but their nephews (sons of sisters), who were their legitimate heirs, were properly looked after. Nayar women generally mated with Brahmans or Nayars, but never with people of lower caste under pain of

1. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, page 83.

death. At ten or twelve years of age of a girl, her mother begged some one of their relations to marry her, and they did so by tying a marriage badge (*tāli*). Then the bridegroom would leave her and go away without any consideration of his new relationship. She might also remain with him if he wished it: If she was not inclined to do so, the mother would then go about seeking some one to take her daughter to live with him. If the girl happened to be pretty, three or four Nayars would agree to live with her, and the more lovers she had, the more highly was she esteemed. Each man had his appointed time from midday to the next day at the same hour, during which some signal was placed at the door so that the others might not enter. She was at liberty to dismiss whomsoever she disliked. The advantage of this system was, that a man, who had not the means to support a wife, might have only a share of the cost of the maintenance. Nevertheless, there was a difficulty in ascertaining the fathers of children, who generally lived with the mothers by whom they were brought up. The fathers, in such cases, were named by the mothers. It is said that the kings made this law in order that the Nayars might not abandon their service. According to this system, the fathers were not succeeded by their sons but by nephews (sons of sisters). The above is a summarised account from 'The Travels on the East coast of Africa and Malabar' by Duarte Barbosa, from those of Lodovico Varthema, as also from the voyage of Frankoy Pyard, page 371.

The orthodox view or rather the traditional account according to the *Keralamahatmyam*,<sup>1</sup> is that certain celestial damsels were brought from the world of Indra by Parasurama to satisfy the sexual cravings of the Kerala Brahmans; and that at Vrishabhadrī (Trichur), he pronounced his commandment to the *Sāmanthan* and *Sudra* castes to gratify the desires of the said Brahmans, ordering them to put off chastity and the cloth which covered their breasts, and declaring that promiscuous intercourse with three or four men in common was devoid of the least taint of sin. This is certainly a very convenient arrangement for the junior members of the Nambuthiri families to be relieved of their life-long bachelorhood (*Bramhacharyam*) without any

Origin of the custom  
of polyandry.

1. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, page 17.

responsibility to support their wives and children from their family property. Whether it was introduced by the Nambuthiris, it is difficult to believe; and it is to be noted, that it was prevailing to a considerable extent in North Malabar, among whom and other low castes their influence was less than in South Malabar and the Cochin State.

The *Smṛiti*<sup>1</sup> says, "the Sudras' appointed path to Heaven is serving the Brahmans". "The practice of Brahmans, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas, having sexual intercourse with the servile women is in accordance with the *sāstrās*. If a Brahman wish to have sexual intercourse with a Sudra wife, the Sudra is bound to gratify the wish. A Sudra cannot be sure of the true parentage of his children". Again, before the Malabar Marriage Commission, the Zamorin Maharaja Bahadur, Ettan Thampuran Avergal, a learned Sanskrit scholar, Kolattūr Váriar and other respectable witnesses unanimously deposed, that, in Kerala, a non-Brahman or *marumakkatháyam* woman need not be chaste, and she is not forbidden to consort with more than one man. To such teachings of the learned and influential leaders of the orthodox community, the Nayars of these days will no longer submit.

Another important theory connects the practice with the military organisation of the Nayar community. Montaigne was evidently of opinion, that it was introduced, because the Nayar leaders looked upon an army of bachelors as the most effective instrument in war.<sup>2</sup> The subjection of the males of a whole race from the earliest youth to the decline of manhood must therefore have been the cause of the fugitive connection and promiscuous intercourse.

European writers, such as Baron Avebury, Meyr, Mc. Linan, and others, have arrived at the conclusion, that the system of inheritance now prevalent among the Nayars must have originated from a type of polyandry resembling free love. In ancient times, the rule was that the wife should remain in her own house and be visited by her husband, and that the eldest female was at the head of the house; which was afterwards transferred to the eldest male. The part of man in the function of generation passed as of secondary importance or as

---

1. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, page 17.

2. Essays of Michael Montaigne.

impossible to determine. It was under the influence of the tangible fact of maternity, that the notions of race, family and inheritance were elaborated and developed. Against this is the fact, that the jungle tribes and very low castes have a regular system of marriage and a kind of paternal inheritance.

Sir Henry Mayne maintains that the origin of society in patriarchal lines, is that polyandry and kinship through females are of temporary duration, liable to be brought about at any stage in the progress of society by peculiar circumstances under which it may be placed. If this were true, the popular belief that Nambuthiris brought it about to accommodate their domestic habits is easily proved.

Letourneau says that there is no warrant to consider this form of conjugal union as having been general, but that it is in exceptional form brought about by necessity in a good number of gross societies. This view to some extent is shared by Herbert Spencer who says that polyandry is one form of marital relations or arrangements independently originating in the earliest societies by successive limitations of promiscuity. Lastly, the opinion is unanimous that the Nayers and other *marumakkathayis* are Dravidians and that polyandry and its accompanying incidents prevailed in Southern India among the non-Aryan tribes. There is strong reason to think, that the *tali* tying ceremony, the prohibition of sexual union outside the caste, and the doctrine of *Anulomam* and *Pathilomam* were originally introduced by Nambuthiri Brahmins as restrictions on promiscuities. Thus, so different are the views of anthropologists on this subject, that it still remains an unsettled problem in the ethnology of Kerala. As has been already said, the custom of polyandry is dead. The women of the upper and middle classes are monogamous, and marriage in practice amply satisfies the definition of Lord Penzance in *Hyde v. Hyde*, namely, "the voluntary union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all other".

There is nothing which prevents a man from entering into conjugal relations with more than one woman at a time ; nevertheless, it is seldom practised.

Polygamy.

Indeed, when a man feels happy and contented with his own wife, very seldom has he any inclination to form *sambandham* with another for the sake of novelty unless forced by the

circumstances of his matrimonial life. If however he do so, his family and society will not recognise it as such, and no woman of any respectability will enter into such an alliance.

According to the customary rules of *sambandham*, the relationship between husband and wife, ceases at the will and pleasure of either party; but in practice, such dissolution of marriage is of rare occurrence. The woman generally does not leave her husband, while the man may send her away whenever he chooses to do so. Marriage can be dissolved only with the consent of the *káranavans* or the other elders of the family. There are certain formalities to be observed in this connection, which vary in detail in different places, but some secret act indicating the intention of repudiation seems necessary before the divorce. In the event of the husband trying to effect a separation from his wife, he sends two or three respectable men to give intimation to the *káranavan* of the wife's family setting forth his reason for so doing. If the wife wishes to terminate the *sambandham*, she brings it to the notice of the *káranavan*, and with his consent tells the husband in the presence of her relatives the reasons for discarding him. In the northern parts of the State, especially in the Chittur Taluk, the prevailing custom is to send for the husband and two of the fellow caste-men and to declare the reluctance of the woman to continue as wife, in the presence of these men. In some cases, instead of the formal declaration of the dissolution of marriage, certain conduct on the part of the parties is tantamount to such a declaration, such, for instance, as the failure by the husband or his family to send the usual presents to the family of the wife for *Onam*, *Vishu* and *Thiruvithira*, the refusal of the wife's people to accept them when sent, the failure to pay for wife's sustenance attended with deliberate omission to visit her, the deliberate absence for three consecutive nights with the consent of the elders from her husband's room. As a rule, no dissolution is allowed unless the cases for the same are enquired into and discussed by guardians and relations. Though a woman is free to marry and to dissolve the union, yet, as a rule, she never does so. The fear of social disgrace and self interest stand in the way of a woman's attempt to separate from her husband. In Cochin as well as in South Malabar, the women

\* Duration of conjugal union.

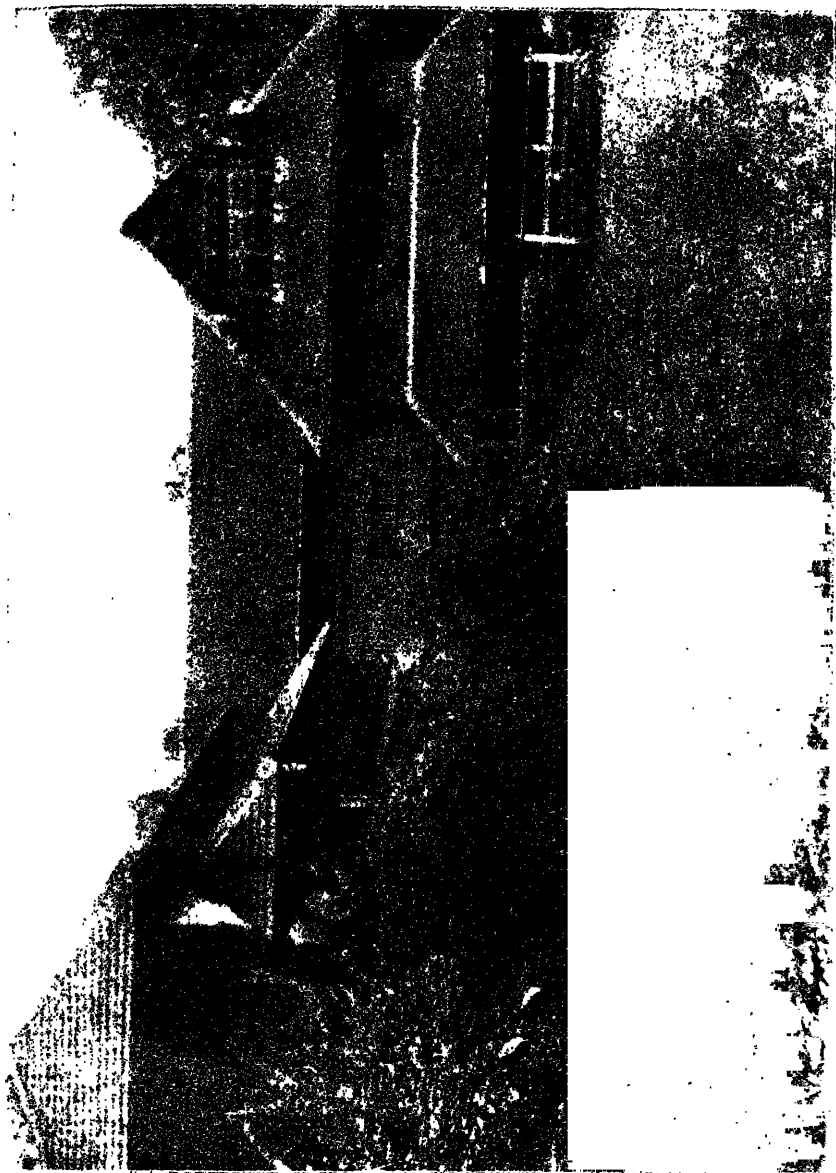
are allowed greater freedom in the choice as well as in the divorce of husbands (*sambandhakárans*), and the females in the family do not interfere in their freedom so long as it does not produce any domestic scandal. The orthodox view is that, as the woman is not independent, she seldom thinks of relinquishing the husband. Arbitrary divorce is thus discouraged, and adultery is a grave social offence. A wife, who is disputatious, who steals her husband's property, who favours another than her husband, who converses with strangers, who is gluttonous, who enters strange houses, should be put away even though she may have born ten sons. Litigation between two families and disagreement between a husband and wife are also the causes. Social stigma follows the adulterer, and the adulteress loses her status in society.

A Nayar woman has to observe certain ceremonies during her first pregnancy. First during and after her seventh month of pregnancy, she bathes and worships the deity in the temple every morning, and eats before her morning meal, a small quantity of butter, over which holy *mantrams* have been recited by the temple priest or by Nambuthiris. This is done generally till delivery. *Pulikudi* (tamarind juice drinking) is an indispensable ceremony performed for every pregnant woman, by the rich and poor alike, on an auspicious day, in the ninth month of pregnancy. An auspicious day, nay, even the very hour, is fixed by the astrologer. The ceremony opens by the planting of a twig of the *ambázha* tree (*Spondias mangifera*) on the morning of the day of the ceremony in the inner court-yard (*nadumittam*) or the northern wing of the house. At the appointed hour (*muhúrtam*), the pregnant woman, after having been bathed and properly attired, is conducted to the northern block of the house (*vatikkini*) where she is seated facing eastwards. The *Ammáyi* or the uncle's wife, whose presence on the occasion is essential, goes to the court-yard, and plucking a few leaves of the planted twig, squeezes a few drops of its juice into a cup. This she hands over to the brother, or uncle, if any, of the pregnant woman. It is necessary that the brother should wear a gold ring on his right hand ring-finger. Holding a country knife (*pisankatti*) in his left hand, with its point towards the north, he pours the tamarind juice over his knife with his right hand three times

The juice dribbles down the knife into her mouth, and she drinks it. In the absence of a brother, some other near relation officiates. After she has swallowed the tamarind juice, she is asked to pick one grain out of several packets of different grains placed before her. The grain in the packet is supposed to declare the sex of the child in her womb. The whole ceremony is wound up by a sumptuous feast to all the relatives and friends of the family. The *enangan's* wife at the time pours oil over the head of the pregnant woman. If the oil flows on the left side, it predicts the birth of a female; if on the right side, a male.

When a Nayar woman is about to become a mother, she is placed in a reclining position on a low wooden couch (*kattódom*), her back supported by a companion, generally an old woman. The *kattódom* is very like, if not identical with, the couch on which the Nayar woman has her oil bath. The surface of it is sloping, the higher end being where the head is laid, and it is scooped out so as to suit the curvatures of the body lying flat. Lying on her back, the thighs are stretched wide apart. Very often she holds in each hand a rope suspended from the ceiling by way of support. The child is received by a woman of the barber caste, who generally officiates as midwife, and in some places this duty is performed by a woman of the Vélán caste. Pollution is observed for fifteen days, and on every day, the mother wears cloths, washed and presented her by *Vannóthi* (a woman of the washerman caste). On the fifteenth day is the purificatory ceremony. As in the case of death pollution, a man of the Athikurussi clan sprinkles on the woman a liquid mixture of oil, and the five products of the cow (*panchagavyam*) with gingelly seeds. Then the woman dips herself in a tank or river or sits on the ground near the bank, and a maid servant pours on her head the water from a vessel as many as twenty-one times. This practice is not universal, though it certainly obtains in the State and in some parts of South Malabar and Travancore.

It may be noticed that, before the mother proceeds to purify herself, the new born baby has also to undergo some rite of purification. The baby is placed on the bare floor, and its father or uncle sprinkles a few drops of cold water on it



A TYPICAL NUMBUTHIRI ILLAM (HOUSE)





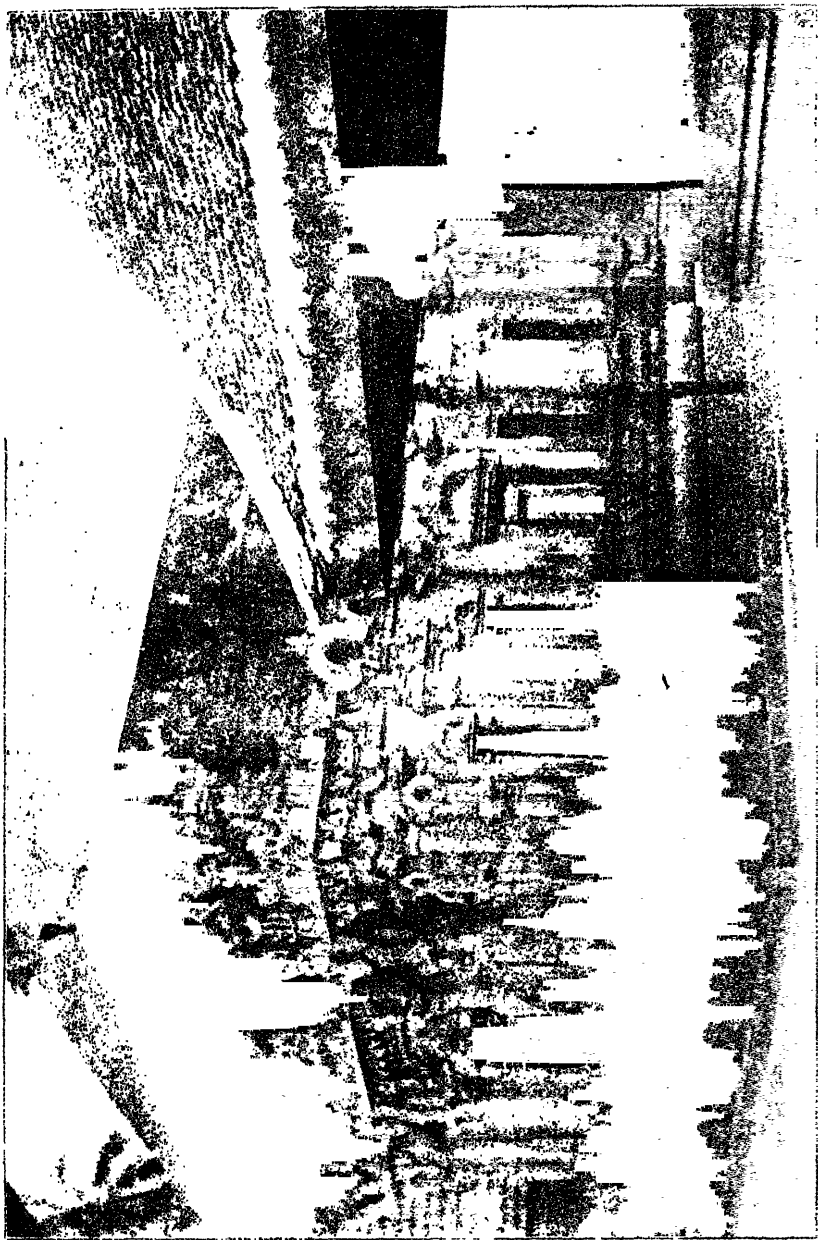
A NAMBUTHIRI BRIDEGROOM



NAYAR WOMEN DRESSED AS ANTHARJANAMS (NAMBUTHIRI LADIES).



A NAMBUTHIRI LADY AND A BRIDE



THIRUVANCHIKULAM TEMPLE (INNER SHRINE)



TRICHUR PURZM.



VEDIC STUDENTS WITH THEIR GURU OR PRECEPTOR.



A NAMBUTHIRI IN DIKSHA (VOW).

and takes it in his hands. The belief is, that the temperament of the child is determined by that of the person who thus sprinkles the water. All the members of the *tarawád* observes pollution for fifteen days immediately after the delivery, during which period they are prohibited from entering temples and holy places.

The twenty-seventh day after the childbirth or the first recurring day of the star under which it was born, is an important day, on which the *káranavan* of the family gives to the child a spoonful or two of milk mixed with sugar and slices of plantain fruits reduced to a kind of pulp. Then he names the child calling it in the ear by name, three times. In some places the naming ceremony takes place in the sixth month on the *Chórinu* day, *i. e.*, on the day of feeding. This is followed by a feast to all friends and relations, the expenses of which are met by the *káranavan* of the *tarawád*. The child is not fed on rice for some time after birth, the practice being to give it the flour of dried plantain boiled with jaggery. There is a particular variety of plantain known as *kunnan* used for this purpose. Well-to-do parents in these days give Mellin's food. The staple food, which is rice, is given to the child for the first time, generally during the sixth month, and is, of course, attended with some ceremony. Necessarily, the astrologer fixes the day, and at the auspicious hour, the child is bathed and adorned (which is the duty of the father), is brought and laid on a plank. A plantain leaf is spread in front of it, and a bright brass lamp is placed near. On the leaf are served a small quantity of cooked rice, generally a portion of the rice offered to some temple divinity, some tamarind, salt, chillies and sugar. Then the *káranavan* or the father ceremoniously sits down facing the child. First he puts into the mouth of the child, a mixture of tamarind, chillies and salt, then some rice, and lastly a little sugar. Thenceforward, the ordinary food of the child is rice. The ceremony is, in some cases, preferably performed in some famous temple, that at Guruvayur being a favourite one for this purpose. A few annas is given to the priest, who gives a small quantity of the food offered to the deity, with which the child is fed.

First birth-day celebration.



The names of Nayars present great varieties and those most commonly met with are the following :—

(a) Andi Menon Kandar Menon Kannan Menon Ittirayarachan Korappan Koman Menon Kumara Menon Thenchu Menon Konthu Nayar Eacharan Nayar	(c) Velayudhan Names of females : Kunjikavu Chirutha Ichon Kotha Nangeli Ooli Cheert Cheeroqna Ichi Ittiri Mukami Oonni Maya	Narayani Dakshayani Karthayani Meenakshi Gowri Bhargavi Janaki Parvathi Sreedevi
(b) Raman Krishnan Govindan Gopalan Achyuthan Sankaran Narayanan Madhavan Sreedharan Raghavan Neelacandhan	(d) Kalyani Lakshmi Madhavi Rugmani Seetha Subhadra	(e) Pet names of males: Appu Appukuttan Kuttan Balan (f) Pet names of females: Nani (Narayani) Mathu (Madhavi) Kunju (Kunjukutti) Eacheri (Easwari) Parukutti.

The names of males given under (a) are those which appear to be caste names, probably given by the Nambuthiris, who are generally fond of these contracted and disguised appellations. The Nambuthiris say, that the Sudras were so ordained by Manu as not to be called by fair names. They were the landlords and priests, and the Nayars had to do servile work for them. They thought that they ought to keep the Sudras in complete ignorance, and could not endure to hear them talking distinctly in their presence. On one occasion, it is said that when a Sudra servant uttered the words "*Súrya Rasmi* (sun's rays)," his master was so displeased, that he closed his ears, for he could not bear to hear a servile fellow using so elegant a phrase from Sanskrit. On another occasion, when a Brahman overheard a Sudra uttering the words *ahimsa paramo dharma* (the highest of all duties is not to injure anybody), he said to himself, "what a pity it is, that a Sudra should be able to quote a vedic expression!". Their influence in these and other matters began gradually to diminish after the time of the great Malayalam poet, Thunjathu Rámanujan. The names of the caste-men given under (b) are chiefly the various designations of Krishna, Rama and Siva, all of whom are worshipped with equal reverence. Some think that the Nayars are chiefly the worshippers of Vishnu, but the fact that, when at Benares, Rameswaram and other places, they perform the ceremonies of offering of rice-balls in honour of their deceased ancestors, calling their ancestors

*Sivagothrakār* (worshippers or followers of Siva); would seem to indicate that they reverence Siva more than Vishnu.

"No people" says Elie Reclus, "have more fully appreciated the maternal family, nor developed it more logically than the Nayars, despite the accumulated obstacles thrown in its way by a race admirably intelligent and moreover victorious."<sup>1</sup> The *tarawād* or *marumakkathayam* family consists in theory of all persons who can trace their descent in the female line from a single ancestress. In its simplest form it is one which consists of mother and her children, living together with their maternal uncle, that is the mother's brother, as *kāranavan* or the senior male member of the family. In its complex form it consists of a mother and all her children, both male and female, all her grand children by her daughters, all her brothers and sisters and the descendants on the sisters' side,—in short, all the relatives of the woman on the female side, however distant their relationship, living together in the same block of buildings, dining together in the same hall and enjoying all the property in common. No descendant through the male line can be a member of such a family. There are at present instances of families containing a hundred or more members who live in one or more buildings situated in a large compound and who are the descendants of one woman separated perhaps by generations of descent, and yet able to trace their common descent from one ancestress.

In such a family the woman senior to others in age was originally mistress or head of the family, and she reigned or governed. Her eldest daughter was prime minister in the family, and through her all orders were transmitted to her little world. The son recognised the priority of the mother before whom he did not even venture to seat himself, unless she had given him permission. The brother obeyed the elder sister, and respected the younger ones. In fact, the affection between brother and sister was a feeling that endured, while conjugal love was but a passing sentiment. The wives of brothers and sons held but a secondary position in the family. The Nayars loved their families more than anything else in the world, and made it the end of their existence. Like all Hindus they held reprehensible the man who

1. Primitive folk, page 159.

deliberately refused to be a father and deprived himself of the sweet cares involved by the rearing of the children, they were indignant with a girl who refused to be a mother, and those who had not reproduced their species were considered to be subject to terrible punishments in the next world. The old order of things has given place to the new. Many of the old time-honoured customs have already disappeared or begun to disappear. The senior woman is no longer the head of the family, and she has given place to the eldest male member who is known as *kāranavan*. In a joint family which contains a large or fairly a large number of females and males, the former with their children occupy the main building or buildings and the latter live apart in another edifice close to and separated from them. Each of the married women has a room or two; and here her husband visits her. The old women and others occupy the common portion of the house. The boys under age live with their mother under whose care they always are, and the father as a casual visitor does not generally concern himself with the rearing of children. These, after coming of age, join the the adult members, and if they can afford it, live in houses of their own with their wives and children. Where the domestic environments are favourable and the influence of the *kāranavan* (as the father in a patriarchal family) and other senior member prevails, the junior members seldom go wrong. In some cases where such influences do not exist, their conduct is not always satisfactory. The habits of the members are generally regular, and the usual time of rising throughout the year is early dawn. After rising, the males either go to their daily routine, or wait for their morning light meal which they partake after bathing and after worshipping the deity in the local temple. The women attend to their children, look to the domestic minor work, bathe and prepare the breakfast. Great attention is paid to their personal cleanliness. As water is near at hand, men, women, and children take a great pleasure in bathing, which, besides being conducive to cleanliness, is also considered purificatory and curative. Their substantial dinner is, as a rule, a little before midday, and the rest of the day is occupied by the women and others either in the perusal of religious books or in the playing of some indoor game, while visits in the afternoon

are also indulged in. In these days of modern civilization, when schools for boys and girls have increased in the State, many take advantage of the instruction imparted in them, so that when the latter become adults, they profitably spend their leisure hours in reading religious and other books. Towards the evening they go to the temple for worshipping and go round it several times, which, though hygienic in its origin, is considered of religious importance. They return home, and their supper is generally before eight o'clock; after this they retire to their rooms, each married woman occupying her separate room or set of rooms. They lie on mats or beds spread on the floor or on the latter placed on cots with which the rooms are neatly furnished. Such in brief is the family life and organisation of well-to-do families of the Nayars. In poor families in which the members subsist by hard work, the daily routine of life considerably differs from those described above.

Mention has already been made of the *kāranavan*, who is the manager of all affairs in the Nayar family. He is legally responsible for the proper management of the joint property, for the education of the junior members and for everything conducive to the general welfare and happiness of every member of the family. It must be remembered that the family property is joint property and that no member can claim that any portion of it belongs to him or to her, nor can any individual member claim a separate possession or enjoyment of any portion. The ground-work of the system is, that the family property is held in trust for the support of the females and their descendants in the female line. The property is impartible and the family is indissoluble except with the consent of all its members. When, in course of time, the family becomes too unwieldy to be governed and managed by one man, the circumstances and natural forces bring about a division of the family into various distinct sections or families. These separate families keep up the original traditions of their common descent, but have no legal right to the property of one another. The members of the family and their descendants in the female line, thus separated by partition from the main stock, form a *tāvazhi* (*ta*=mother, *vazhi*=line, *i. e.*, mother's line). They live in a separate building and own that portion of the joint property which is theirs in the partition. and which is managed

by the woman's brother or some other senior member as *káranavan*.

There are some who love and admire the system, and they depict the *tarawád* as a group of males and females bound together by the sacred tie of common descent from one ancestors' grand-mother. "The females have only to follow the natural instinct to be fruitful and to multiply, while the males, free from all care for their own progeny, are expected to labour like the honey bee for the common good of the *tarawád*-hive, and pour their earnings into the lap of the venerable *káranavan*, who, in the exercise of absolute discretion, administers the income for the benefit of all. Protected by the impartibility of the estate, refreshed by the acquisitions of the junior members, and under the beneficent sway of the senior male, the *tarawád* would rise high and endure through generations."<sup>1</sup> The advantages of such a complete joint family system are three-fold: firstly, the genial society it affords, the closest association of young and old, and the abundant opportunity for recreation and instruction; secondly, in the process of production many of the advantages of concerted labour are secured, as is obvious, without carelessness, dishonesty or misdirected production and consumption; and thirdly, there is the remarkable saving in the process of consumption. The freedom and independence of Nayar women, their influence in the family and the absence of conventional restrictions, such as child marriage, enforced widowhood and the other customs which exercise so baneful an influence upon Hindu society elsewhere are other advantages that add to the excellence of the Nayar system of life.

The system above described, may have worked smoothly enough in former days; but in these days of civilization, with the growing wants of the members, coupled with the indifference and selfishness of the *káranavan* and the other members, the joint family tends to disintegration. At a certain point the mere increase of the members renders it intolerable for them all to live together under one roof, and when that stage is reached, the *tarawád* splits up into *távazhis*, each containing a mother, her brothers and her children.

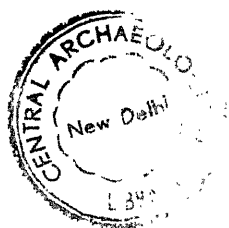
It is to the woman that the fortune of the family belongs, and yet she is not the mistress of the house but only one

1. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, page 44.

of many joint members dependent on the *kāranavan*. The females and the junior members pass their lives in utter discontent and misery, if the *kāranavan* happens to be unsympathetic and tyrannical. The father is not the legal guardian of his children, for whose training and education the *kāranavan* is responsible. In families, where there are many boys and girls, the chances are that he educates none of them, on the plea that he cannot afford to educate them all, nor can he make any invidious distinction. The family, in certain cases, becomes the seat of envy, hatred and dissensions, and not a day passes without some dispute or other among the members. It is said that with the advancement of civilization the system becomes more and more unworkable; it offends against every principle of economy, healthy life and natural affection. By freeing a man from the obligation of maintaining his wife and children, it sanctions the reckless propagation of species, destroys the motive power for prudence and foresight, forces up the population to the very point where it must be kept down by actual want of means of subsistence. It "huddles together" as a family a number of distant relatives not necessarily drawn to each other by any bond of natural affection. It makes home life impossible, for the father is a casual visitor, and mother and children are but units in a heterogeneous flock, dependent on a practically irresponsible guardian, who from a mere accident of his being the eldest of the flock is expected to be able to regard every member with an impartial eye, and at the same time preserve the interests of his wife and children.<sup>1</sup> These causes are at work and tend to divide the families into several branches in the direction of *tuvazhis* by partition. Fortunately, in the Cochin State, such evils as those above described are of rare occurrence, for partition is effected as early as the symptoms of disunion and ill-feeling among the members are visible.

1. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, page 48.

68006



## CHAPTER III.

### THE SUDRAS OF COCHIN.

#### A. THE HIGH CASTE SUDRAS (NAYARS)

(Continued).

The Nayars follow the *marumakkathāyam* law of succession, *i. e.*, the law which regulates succession through the female line. The senior male member called the *kāranavan* is entitled to the full possession of the property, and is absolute in its management. The junior members, on the other hand, have a claim to residence and maintenance in the family house. They cannot call for an account except as an incident to a prayer for the removal of the manager for gross misconduct, nor claim any specific share of the income, nor even require that the maintenance provided for them should be in proportion to the income of the *tarawād*. An absolute discretion in this direction is vested in the manager who is the legal guardian of every member of the family.<sup>1</sup> He is not accountable to any member in the *tarawād* in respect of its income, nor can a suit be maintained for an account of the *tarawād* property in the absence of fraud on his part. He is under no obligation to support any member of his *tarawād* by his own labour or from his self-acquisitions. The only restraint on him in the management is, that he cannot alienate the lands of the family except with the consent of all the other members and without proper necessity.<sup>2</sup> If a family has so far increased in the number of its members that they cannot conveniently live under the same roof any longer, it divides itself with the consent of the senior member into *tāvazhis* to each of which is assigned a portion of the property for maintenance, and such *tāvazhis* may reside in separate houses or farm-houses belonging to the family and appropriating from the lands newly assigned to them an income sufficient to maintain themselves. In the partition of

1. Vide Mayne's Hindu Law, sec. 268.

2. I. L. R. II, Mad. 328.

a Nayar *tarawád*, all the members are equally entitled to a share. The self-acquisitions of each member of a *tarawád* are at his absolute disposal during his life-time, but this right lapses to the *tarawád* on his death.<sup>1</sup> In families where the *káranavans* look after the welfare of each individual member and the savings of the junior members go to increase the wealth of the family, there is peace and prosperity. Such families are rarely found in these days. Times are changed, as also the conditions of the community, and the old and large families are disappearing through mismanagement. In the majority of cases, when the senior member takes up the management, he is too old and unfit to govern a score of men and women younger than himself and bound to him by no natural tie of affection. He often becomes a mere puppet in the hands of an unscrupulous but stronger member while the other members of the *tarawád* suffer from the injustice consequent under such circumstances. In some cases he misappropriates the family property and alienates it in favour of his wife and children, and the gross acts of spoliation carried on by *káranavan* have reduced some of the respectable families in Malabar and elsewhere to poverty and misery. It is also said, that the junior members are disobedient and do not work for the common good and this state of things is also common everywhere. Another cause for the downfall of the ancient family system is the growing disinclination among its junior members to work for the common good of the *tarawád* and their dislike to the rule of the *káranavan*.<sup>2</sup>

The Nayers who follow this *marumakkathúyam* law of inheritance include nearly all the aristocracy of the country, but the notion that every *tarawád* has an estate sufficient to feed an indefinite number of souls is unfounded and erroneous. Most of the families are poor, and the *káranavans* are mere tenant farmers cultivating a few acres of land on a precarious tenure, and a law which requires such a man, from the produce of his farm, to feed and provide for all the descendants of his female relatives from the time of their birth to their death, whether they work or not, is one of those laws which continue to exist in name but are actually disregarded in practice.<sup>3</sup>

In ancient times the rulers of Cochin held supreme sway in the territories which belonged to them. There were no regular councils, nor assemblies;

Tribal organisations.

1. II, Mad. H. C. R. 162.

2 and 3. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, pages 49-51.



and the Rajas were mostly guided by their own will and pleasure unless it ran counter to the customs of the country. Many of them had learned Brahmans to instruct them in the fundamental and long established laws of the country.

Certain checks upon their arbitrary power existed in the form of general assemblies of the nation, but these were seldom held. These were of two kinds: those assembled under the orders of the Raja, and those assembled by the spontaneous will of the people. In the former case, messengers, who by right of birth and descent were entitled to that office, were despatched in all directions to summon the people. When assembled, they sat in a circle in the open air, while a number of Nayars kept guard over them. The propositions were then discussed, and the measures proposed were rejected or adopted by the unanimous silence or clamour of those present, but in affairs of minor importance not affecting the welfare of the whole community, the chiefs of the nation were summoned, and they decided the questions laid before them.

The assemblies summoned by the will of the nation were conducted in much the same manner, but with more impetuosity. They were held only in cases of emergency, when the Raja was guilty of extreme tyranny or of gross violation of the law. Then all the landed proprietors were bidden to attend, and if any one dared to refuse to obey the summons, the assembly sentenced his houses, gardens or estates to be devastated. If he persisted in his disobedience, he would be deprived of his privileges and votes, and might even be sentenced to banishment. As the object of such assemblies was to thwart the will of the ruler, he on his side did all he could to obstruct their holding such assemblies. The Raja had no right nor power to prevent them by force of arms, but he sent *Pandara Patti* (servants of the rulers) to provoke them with all manner of annoyances and to pelt them with stones, sand, and dirt. The Nayars on guard did their best to keep off the assailants with their shields, and, if any one of them, provoked beyond endurance, were to strike or hurt one of the youths, it would be regarded as treason, and, as such, the assembly would be liable to a heavy fine and would be deprived of its inviolability. The Raja might then disperse them by force of arms; but if he failed to subdue them, they would all desert their allegiance. Allies and neighbours did their best to intercede between the parties and to secure for everyone his proper

rights. Thus did these *kúttams* (assemblies) exercise a wholesome influence, and act as a powerful check upon the rulers and ministers of the middle ages.<sup>1</sup> They also dealt with wider questions of castes and other matters affecting the welfare of the people. In former times there were also minor councils of *Pramánis* or leaders of the people in every *Desam* exercising similar social functions. A survival of this system even now exists in every village, and their deliberations and decisions upon social matters and caste disputes have great weight. In important matters such as the outcasting of a member of the caste, etc., His Highness the Raja who has always been the social as well as the political head of the State would deliberate upon them with the help of the Brahman *vaidiks*, and his decisions become final. The individual who is placed under a ban is prohibited from entering any temple, bathing in the public tanks, and is, in short, ostracised.

The Rajas were in former times the fountain of all justice, but were assisted by *Karyakkars* or ministers and Brahmins in administering it. All caste disputes and offences were left to the caste assemblies to deal with, while civil disputes were either left to the arbitration of the caste assemblies or of three or four prominent men. There was no written code, but the punishments assigned by custom fitted the crimes, and they varied with the status of the caste and of the person. The nobles enjoyed the privilege of freedom from confinement. The Brahmins and women were never put to death; the former were punished for grave offences by loss of caste and banishment, and the latter by being sold as slaves. The punishment of death was reserved for such heinous offences as sacrilege, the wilful murder of a Brahman or a cow. The following is a summary of the account given by Duarte Barbosa, pp. 116—117, regarding the methods of dealing with criminals and the nature of the punishments inflicted on them in former times:—When any member of a low caste committed robbery about which a complaint had been made to the king or the governor, orders were issued for his apprehension, and if he was caught and he confessed his guilt, he was generally impaled. His head was severed, and the body being placed on its back, the arms and legs were fastened with ropes to four posts, while the multitude to show their contempt spat upon it. If, however, the malefactor was a Moor, he was beheaded. The

1. Letters from Malabar by J. C. Visscher, pages 76-77.

stolen property went to the ruler of the State. If the stolen property was discovered after the escape of the thief, it was returned to the owner after a certain number of days, and a fourth part was appropriated by the State. If, however, a thief refused to confess his guilt, he was confined for a period of eight days during which every method of torture known to the keepers of the prisons was tried to extort his confession. If he continued in reiterating his innocence, it was left to the accuser to elect whether he should be let off or forced to undergo trial by ordeal. In the latter case, on an auspicious day, the accused would be allowed to bathe and recite his daily prayers, after which he was conducted to the idol in the temple. Before the idol he swore that he had not committed the theft nor did he know the guilty person, and plunged his two fingers up to the middle joint into a caldron of boiling oil. If he was burnt, he was accounted guilty of the crime; if unhurt, he was liberated. Another form of proving the guilt or innocence of a prisoner who would not confess his crime, was to make him thrust his hand into a mantle in which a sacred and poisonous snake had been wrapped and force him to lift it out. If he was bitten, he was guilty. A third form was the wading through a tank full of alligators before a pagoda at Palliport, fifteen miles north of Cochin, and if he survived he was considered innocent."<sup>1</sup> Concerning the procedure against the debtors, a curious custom seems to have prevailed, which is thus described by *Varthema*:—

"Let us suppose the case that some one has to pay me twenty-five ducats, and the debtor promises me to pay them many times and does not pay them. I, not being willing to wait any longer, nor to give him any indulgence, shall take a green branch in my hand, shall go softly behind the debtor, and with the said branch shall draw a circle on the ground surrounding him; and if I can enclose him in a circle, shall say to him these words three times: 'I command you by the head of the Brahmans and the king that you do not depart hence, until you have paid me and satisfied me as much as I ought to have from thee,' and he will satisfy me or truly he will die without any other guard, and should he quit the said circle, the king will put him to death."

"It has been already said, that the nobles enjoyed exemption and privileges, and that they could not be taken and put in irons; but if a noble were to rob or kill any one or a cow or to sleep with a woman of low caste or of the Brahmans

1. *Letters from Malabar* by J. C. Visscher, pages 68-69.

or if he ate and drank in the house of a low caste-man or spoke ill of the king, and if any one of these were established in his own words, the king would call three or four honorable gentlemen and have him put to death. After he was dead, they laid him on his back, to place the king's warrant on his breast. If he was left dead in the country, the dead was so exposed as a prey to vultures and dogs. If he was put to death in the city, the dead body was allowed to be removed either as a mark of favour, or on payment of fine, by the citizens with the king's permission. If, on the other hand, he commits any other offence, he would be dealt with in the same way as any criminal already described."

Cruel as the administration of justice might appear to be in ancient times, many early writers bear testimony to the fact that private property was as secure in the fourteenth century as it is to-day. and that security and justice were firmly established in the land. Varthema was impressed with the honesty of the inhabitants; and the favourable testimony of the previous writers was confirmed by Pyrard-De-Laval, a Frenchman, who remarked that justice was well administered and awarded gratuitously. These systems have been completely forgotten and given place to the institution of regular courts, where justice is administered in accordance with the principles of British jurisprudence.

From the earliest times, even perhaps before the Aryan immigration, there appears to have been a complete military organisation among the Sudras of Malabar. The country was divided into *Náds*, or principalities, and the smallest territorial unit in it was a *Désam* (or village) presided over by a *Désavázhí* (ruler of a *Désam*). Each of the *Désams* and *Náds* was designated by the allotted quota of Nayers it was required to put into the field. The names of these divisions, even after the long lapse of time, have not been forgotten. The authority of the chiefs of these military divisions, large and small, was hereditary in their respective families and they had appropriate titles of distinction. They were not always in attendance on the Raja's person. If not required on particular State duties or religious services, they were called out for offensive or defensive warfare.

A chief was not considered a *Náduvázhi* ( ruler of a *Nad*), who had not at least a hundred soldiers attached to him,

and one with less than that number was called a *Désaváshi*. There were in those days no taxes levied from the people, and the chief from the Rajas down to the *Désaváshi* possessed demesne lands for their support which were cultivated either by themselves or leased to *kudiyáns* or tenants; but the following were the chief sources of income, based upon feudal rights and privileges. The rulers levied custom duties upon exports and imports, taxes upon houses of fishermen, tradesmen and professional men. Criminal fines went to fill their coffers, and succession duties were levied upon the estates of deceased persons, especially those who held offices of State or rights over land. Outcast women were made a two-fold source of profit. Lewd adulterous women were made over to the chiefs with a premium for the trouble of looking after them, and the chiefs used in turn to sell the women to foreign merchants as slaves or wives to *Chettis*. The estates of persons who died without heirs were escheated, nor could an heir be adopted without the Raja's consent, for which a fee was generally levied. Protection fees from strangers and merchants were levied under various names and customary presents were the ruler's dues on occasions of feast or funeral. Wrecks were his perquisites, and various animals his monopoly. Concerning the former, Marco Polo wrote about the kingdom of Eli, "And you must know that if any ship enters the estuary and anchors when she has been bound for some other port, they seize her and plunder the cargo. They say that you are bound somewhere else, and it is God that sent you hither to us, so we have a right to all your goods, and think it no sin to act thus. This naughty custom prevails all over the Provinces of India, to wit, that if a ship be driven by a stress of weather into some other port than that to which it is bound, it is sure to be plundered. But if a ship came bound originally to the place, they received it with all honour and gave it protection."<sup>1</sup> The custom of the taking of ships and cargoes lasted down to recent times, until the English factory at Tellicherry entered into agreements with three of the country-powers for the exemption of English vessels from such seizures.

Among the animals that became the property of the Raja were cows with three or five dugs, cattle that has killed a man or other animals, cattle with a white spot near the corner of

1. Yufies Marco Polo, page 374.

the eye, buffaloes with white tips to their tails, wild elephants caught in traps and wild hogs that had fallen into wells.

Even in social matters, these chieftains had supreme powers. In the settlement of marriages in any part of the country, the Nayars had to obtain the chieftain's sanction who held sway over the particular locality. The custom is even now in vogue though in a visibly weakened form. In the celebration of a *Kettu kalyanam* or *sambandham* in any part of the country, the parties concerned visited the chieftain and bought his consent with presents. For without such consent no settlement and celebration thereafter could be arranged. His consent had to be procured even for the holding of festivals.

The chieftain's powers were so great that, if a wife living with her husband proved an object of attraction to another, adequate presents to the chieftain would buy him a formal writ, giving him the rights of a husband over that woman. Thus even so late as only a generation or two ago, the chieftain's power was exercised in the encouragement of polyandry.

When a tali-tying ceremony had to be performed for a girl of any decent family in a locality, she was taken to the local chieftain with a nuzzar or *tirumulkāzhcha* and other things prepared for the festival that was to follow. In return the girl was given a golden bracelet which she was authorised to wear in his presence. No girl who had not received such a one could wear it.

In certain parts of the State people were afraid to erect buildings of more than one storey, lest they should incur the inexorable wrath of the chieftain; nor were they allowed to tile thatched houses. Departures from these customs were allowed only with the consent of the chieftain, embodied in a writ issued by him. In rural parts even to this day such restrictions are not totally inoperative. In the State His Highness the Raja gives his sanction in regard to some social matters even to this day and Nambutiri landlords exercise a similar authority among the tenants occupying their lands. Certain kinds of conveyances such as palanquins and dholies were reserved only for chieftains while the *Pallichans* were the only people who were employed to carry them. Various titles<sup>1</sup>

---

1. Vide pages 18-20.

were conferred upon the people. These were, in brief, the rights and privileges<sup>1</sup> of the feudal chieftains of old.

The question regarding the existence in ancient times of a village organisation in the Cochin State, as in Malabar, is somewhat unsettled. Some are of opinion that the village communities of the east coast have no counterpart in the west, and that there were no regular villages; while others state that the organisation of the country for agrarian, civil, social, and administrative purposes was the ordinary type closely allied to the Tamil nationalities, the cradle of its races, languages, and institutions: and that it rested on the village system in its truest and simplest form. The earliest social organisation was apparently based upon the family group into which the various tribes or castes divided themselves, each with its more or less well defined territorial limits. The Brahmans were grouped in *grāmams* and the Nayars in *tharās* or *chéris*. The old territorial unit was a *désam* presided over by *Désavázhi* or *Jenmidar*, and a number of *désams* constituted a *nád* ruled over by a *Náduvázhi* or local chieftain who was subject to the Raja. The rights and privileges of the *Désavázhi* were: (1) the direction of the religious ceremonies of the village pagodas, (2) the management of the village pagoda lands and servants, (3) the control of marriages and other ceremonies in the village, and (4) the superintendence of all offences of the *désam* or village. He had besides the civil direction of the religious and military affairs of the villages. The same head-man was a *Désavázhi* or *Jenmi* according as he exercised all or only the first two functions in the village. The *Náduvázhi* was the military chief of his *nád* who was bound to attend the Raja and to march wherever he was directed with all the fighting men of his territory under the control of *Désavázhis* of their respective villages. In time of peace he collected the ordinary and extra revenue, and was helped by one or two accountants. Thus an old typical village was one which consisted of the houses of the military class of Nayars and of those of other low castes, the members of which, like the medieval guilds, were bound together by the ties of common interests, rendering to one another reciprocal services for a share of the village produce, and for the protection which they enjoyed. The village in

1. Malabar and Its Folk, pages 106-127.

fact contained all the rudiments of the State. There was the head-man with his assistants whose duties have been already mentioned. There were also the hereditary village servants (*cheria jenmakkárs*), the village Panchayets or *kúttams*, and the *Kavalai* system of police, and the village watchmen (*kúval-kkárs*) with their grain fees, and sacred institutions, with their usual privileges. And finally there were independent Nayar chieftains with their private properties and usual sources of income and taxation.

The village life is simple, delightful, and charming, but it is gradually passing away under the influence of western civilization. It is therefore of some ethnographical interest to preserve an account of it at its period of transition.

The village education may first be taken for treatment. The old village school or pial school masters were called *Ezhuttachans* or *Asáns*, some of whom were maintained by the leading families on small monthly allowances and meals, while others owned schools and lived upon the income derived from the pupils thereof. The education of youths commenced at a very early period, for which an auspicious day, nay, an auspicious hour, generally the *Vijaya Desami* or *Vidyárambham* (beginning of the alphabet) day, the last day of *Desara* in the month of *Kanni* or *Thulám* (September-November) was chosen, when the local *Asán* or any fairly educated man was invited to give the boy his first lesson. In a conspicuous part of the building a bell-metal vessel was placed. On this was spread a thin layer of rice, and on each side of the vessel was placed a bag of rice and paddy, while a lighted lamp was also placed beside it. In front of these sat the infant scholar three or five years of age. The *Asán* or the teacher wrote on the boy's tongue with a gold coin (*fanam*) the divine invocation *Hari Sree Gana Pata Ye Namah* (Salutation be to Vishnu, Saraswati and Ganapati). The initiation was completed by the teacher holding the boy's ring finger and tracing the letters of the alphabet in the rice in the vessel. The ceremony would then come to an end with a feast to the inmates of the house as well as to friends and relations. After this, he was placed under a teacher who taught him along with others to write the letters of the alphabet on sand. This would go on for a month or two until the



youngster got a mastery of the letters. Then he was taught to read and write short sentences on cadjan leaves (*Ola Ezhutal*). He was made to commit to memory short verses, and lessons in arithmetic were added to his curriculum. Thus the youngster acquired a fair knowledge of reading, writing, and arithmetic, in about two years, and was thereafter recommended to an advanced course of studies, which consisted of a study of Sanskrit, the perusal of the *Purānas*, and also arithmetic sufficient to enable him to calculate the position of planets and help him in the casting of horoscopes. Girls also were taught reading, writing, arithmetic, and singing, and were encouraged in the reading of the *Purānas*. Such in brief was the course of instruction imparted in these small institutions.

The schools were flimsy sheds with little or no furniture, while the boys sat on small mats or on the floor, which was covered with sand for purposes of writing. The teacher had a raised seat from which he supervised and listened to the loud recitations of the lessons set on the previous evenings. The boys went to him, one by one, repeated their lesson, and received another written by him on the palm leaf, which was to be learnt during the day. The school hours were generally from seven to ten in the morning and again from two to five in the afternoon. During the latter hours, the budding scholars were instructed in the reading of the Ramayana and other *Purānas*; and before the end of the lessons for the day, the boys were made to repeat with one voice, some mathematical formula. At home, the boys revised their work and recited the names of Gods and short verses as prayers to them. They had no work for about 12 days in the month, besides the usual Hindu holidays. Twice during the month, when the fortnightly holidays commenced, *i. e.*, on *Dvādaśi* (the 12th day after the full or new moon), the teacher was remunerated by each boy with the payment of an anna or two, and even this was sometimes evaded by the opportune absenting of some pupils. He also received presents of cloth with a rupee or two from some of the richer families to which a few of his pupils belonged. Boys were subjected to a rigorous course of discipline; caning was freely resorted to as a mode of correction, and the teacher was often regarded with terror rather than with respect and admiration. Their only books were manuscripts on cadjan leaves; their

only training was the training of the memory, and the learned pedagogue never bestowed a thought on cultivating the thinking powers or the originality of his pupils. But this type of school and school-master is fast disappearing under the modern regime of elementary schools.

Next in importance to the school-master is the Kaniyan, an indispensable factor in the affairs and ceremonies of the village.<sup>1</sup>

Then come the artisan classes whose services are necessary in the construction of houses, and the making of implements of agriculture. They were paid for their work either in kind or in coin.

The other men of importance in the village economic life were the physician, the village washerman, and the village barber. The village physician was a man of parts; for, not only did he tend the sick and the ailing, but also cast out devils from persons possessed, and with the aid of well-cherished charms guarded them from the effects of the evil eye. The village washermen were of the Veluthédan and the Mannán caste. The services of the former were always requisitioned when people wished to become free from pollution, an act the omission of which leads to outcasting.

The village barber is another indispensable factor in the village ceremony and is employed for the shaving before all ceremonies. His privileges cannot be encroached upon by his own caste-men from other villages.

The village organisation above described is preserved to a certain extent even now and most probably the Kaniyan's profession will survive all other relics of Hindu institutions, as his services are considered to be of essential importance in matters of every day life.

The ordinary games pursued by the young men of the village are the foot-ball matches, *Attakalam*, *Kayyámkāli*, and *Kaikottikkāli* (a favourite circular dance of the women), *Uzhinjūl* and others, while cards and chess are common enough on festive occasions. Cock-fighting is an interesting pastime among the lower classes.

The most important of the village pastimes are the dramatic performances, a description of which is given in the following pages. The drama in Malabar sprang into being in

1. Vide my account of the Kaniyans, Vol. I, Chap. XI, pages 190-93.

the early ages, and *Krishnúttam* and *Rámanáttam* are among the earliest productions in the Malayalam literature. The origin of the former is interesting. A pious devotee, Vilvamangalattu Swámiyar, by name, resided in the temple of Guruváyúr in the Chaughat Taluk, which belonged to the Zamorin of Calicut. One of the Zamorins, while on a pilgrimage to the temple, asked the pious Swamiyar to show him the person of the God Krishna. On his wish being gratified, he was so much attracted by the handsome countenance of the divine 'Child God' that the Raja attempted to detain him by catching him by the head. But, alas, he vanished, leaving in the hands of the Raja a single peacock's feather which had adorned the crown on his head. The Raja who was a great scholar determined to write a drama which would contain the life of Krishna—from his incarnation to his departure to heaven—and *Krishnúttam* was the outcome of that resolve. This play, which is seldom acted outside Calicut, takes eight days for its performance beginning as a rule, each night, at 10 p. m. and lasting until 3 a. m.

The cost of a night's performance is 64 fanams (eighteen rupees, four annas, and seven pies). Once it is said that when the actors went to Tripunathura, the residence of His Highness the Raja of Cochin, who had a night's performance in his palace, *Kamsavadham* (death of Kamsa, an *Asura* king, who was the maternal uncle of Krishna) was the play selected for the night; and to try the strength of the actor Krishna, a tusk-er who was brought to the stage was caught hold of by the tusks and killed. The play was never thereafter sent either to Cochin or Travancore.

The other play which is equal in importance to the one just described is the *Ramanáttam*, and was composed by the *Kottarakkara Tampuran*, a distant relative of the then ruling sovereign of Travancore. Once this prince asked the Zamorin of Calicut to send his actors for a few nights' performance in his own palace; but his request was refused on the plea that the prince as well as the southerners generally, were not able to appreciate so important and erudite a drama. This led to the composition of a play by the prince himself.

Plays, as a general rule, are not very popular at present, perhaps with the exception of the one kind which is now being

played. There are also other kinds of plays, which are called *Attakkathas* (plays in which the incidents are represented by dancing and gestures) in Travancore, and *Kuthakalis* in Malabar. Many additions to these were made by different scholars in different times, and they now number about fifty-six, most of which are now being acted. Many or all of them possess a high order of literary excellence, and are, year after year, prescribed as vernacular text books for University Examinations.

*Personal adornment of the actors.*—In the beginning the actors had no regular dress as at present, nor was there any curtain dividing the audience from the stage. The only theatrical property known in those days were figures clumsily drawn upon the bark of the areca palm and attached to the bodies of the actors, while the orchestra consisted only of the *maddalam*, a kind of drum. But innovations were soon introduced, and the first of these were those introduced by the Tirur or Bettattunad Raja.

It may not be out of place here to give a short sketch of a day's performance as it is to-day. A travelling company, which usually consists of twelve actors, four singers, and four musicians who form an "orchestra with drums (*maddalam* and *chenda*), gongs (*chengalam*) and cymbals (*elathalam*)", is invited and lodged in a house near which they are to give the performance. In the morning they are given gingelly oil for an oil-bath, and are then served with rice, *kanji*, and *pappadam*. This forms their breakfast. After it, they retire to sleep till about four o'clock in the afternoon. At five o'clock they are treated to a sumptuous dinner, and half an hour later begins, by beat of drums and other musical instruments of the company, a formal announcement to the villagers in the neighbourhood that a play is to be performed that night.

The stage is nothing more than a crude wooden structure slightly raised from the ground. The drop curtain consists usually of pieces of cloth sewn together and the figure of a god or an animal drawn thereon. The auditorium consists of mats strewn on the floor for the audience to sit on, while two bell-metal lamps, containing cocoanut-oil and wicks of rolled cotton cloth, are the only means of lighting the theatre. Sometimes to add to the solemnity of the occasion conch shells are

intermittently blown. Such are the crude theatrical properties which the actor has to face.

At about eight o'clock begins the *Thodayam purapād*, consisting of songs which are meant to initiate the audience into the mysteries of the plot. But this takes place behind the drop curtain, which has not yet been drawn up. Next comes the *Vandanalōkam*—a song in propitiation of some particular god—and then begins the play. The actors perform only by means of dumb-show, and the music is provided by the singers who, though invisible, are close at hand. All changes of thought, feelings, and emotions are conveyed by means of gestures of which there are said to be sixty-four different kinds, and in the commingling of these, lies the skill of the actor. Inhuman and unchivalrous acts, such as chopping off the noses and breasts of women, are usually enacted behind the scenes; though, in certain cases, these are made realistic by the characters to be victimised wearing false noses and breasts. It is not until the dawn of day that the play ends. The cost of a night's performance is only about fifteen rupees, while the cost of all the stock in trade is often less than 400 rupees.

A special innovation in this direction was made by the Valia Kovil Tampurān of Travancore and others who translated a few of the most important Sanskrit dramas. They introduced a real improvement in the construction of the stage and scenery, as also in the mode of dress, the style of music, and the method of acting, all of which were changes for the better. Dramatic companies were organised in many places where the plays were acted. They were at first very popular, but most of them disappeared as they did not play; but yet poets and versifiers still continue their work of producing plays for the stage.

*Mohiniyāttam*.—This is an institution, very much like the nautch of the East Coast. A leader (*Nettuvan*) obtains the service of two or three young girls of low birth and trains them for the performance. He takes the girls from house to house, gets a paltry allowance for each day's performance, and thus makes a living. The performance is usually acted at night, when the girls, dressed in the gaudy attire, are led by the *Nettuvan* in an amorous dance. This is an abominable institution, and the women who are thus rented out are looked

upon with contempt. It must be noted that they live separately, having little or nothing in common with the other classes, and that the institution is dying a silent and natural death.

*Songs.*—There have been very many songs current among the Nayars even from a very remote period; and they are chiefly composed and sung in honour of deities, and are mostly prayers addressed to them. A translation of these is not here attempted, for they lose much of their beauty, but the following, however, are the most important of them :—

*Bhadra-kali Páttu* :—These are songs which are sung in honour of Káli, and are supposed to have been composed by the Sudras of Palghat long before the Malayalam era. Certain dramatic songs also appear to have been composed about the same time, and refer to the deities on the hills as well as to the kings of the period. They are sung in towns and villages, between Anamala and Trichur in the east, and the Walayar forests on the other side. The ancient name of these localities was Cheranad, and it was the first place to be occupied by people, when Kerala was a marshy tract. As evidence of this, remains of houses are still to be seen at the foot of the hills. In a place of such historic importance were composed and sung these songs, which are so full of the ideas of the Vedanta and Yoga philosophies, and which give a clue to the nature of the people who once lived there. There is also another variety of songs referring to *Dárikavadham*, (murder of the demon Dárikan), and they are sung by a class of men called the *Kurippans*. There are also other old songs such as the *Sásta páttu* (songs in honour of Sásta).

*Ganapati páttu* (songs in honour of Ganapati) and serpent songs :—Among the old songs, those referring to agriculture, and composed during the third century of the Malayalam era, occupy a prominent place, and the agriculturists of the northern parts of the State even to-day follow the precepts laid down in these songs. But excepting, the song commemorating the deeds of *Meppayil Kunji Othenan*, the Robinhood of North Malabar, there are no songs which sing of the deeds of brave men.

*The chief festivals.*—(1). *Onam* :—This is an important national festival, which falls in the second half of August or the first half of September, and is celebrated in commemoration of Mahábali, an *Asura* king, whose reign is believed

to have been a period of uninterrupted peace, plenty, and prosperity. Growing jealous and apprehensive of the glory and greatness of this great king, the Dévás entreated Vishnu to quell the pride of this earthly potentate; and Vishnu, thereupon, appeared as *Vámana* (dwarf, his fifth incarnation) to request him for a plot of three feet of earth. The prayer was readily granted by the sovereign, who found to his cost that he could not satisfy him; for, large as his kingdom was, it was found to be very small when measured by the *Vámana*, who eventually placed his foot upon his head and pushed him down to the regions below. Grieved at the loss of their dear king, his subjects prayed to Vishnu to allow him to re-visit the earth once a year, and this is popularly believed to happen on the *Tiruvónam* day.

The festival is celebrated in honour of his re-appearance, and with it the return of happy days. It is practically confined to four days which are observed as holidays throughout Kérala, and people of all ranks from the prince to the peasant acknowledge them as such. Ten days before *Tiruvónam*, signs of the approaching festival are visible in every Nayar house, which, by its neatness and cleanliness all around, puts on a gay appearance. A portion of the front yard of the house, opposite to the store-room, is selected, and there a temporary stall of mud is put up for the royal visitor to sit upon. Flowers are strewn over it and on the night previous to the auspicious day, pyramid-shaped images of the king made of wood or clay, called *Trikkúkarappan*, are placed upon it amid the deafening cheers of the members of the family who assemble at the gate to greet him. *Pujas* are daily made both in the morning and evening before the inmates take their meals, and this continues up to the closing of the festival. In respectable families the festival opens with the presents of cloths by the *káranavans* to the junior members of the family as well as to other close relations, servants, and others. This is also the occasion when tenants make gifts of curry-stuffs, chiefly banana, for the celebration of the festival, and they are often rewarded with cloths and also fed. A feast is held on a large scale, all the four days, while the essential element in it is the consumption of bananas or *nentranpazham*. The fruits are cut into two or three pieces, boiled in water, and are eaten alone or with *pappadam*.

Another peculiar feature of this festival is that all the male and female members of the family sit apart at meals. By mid-day the principal meal is over, and each goes dressed in fine attire now, seeks the amusement most congenial to him. Field-games, such as hand-ball or rounders, personal combats, games of chess, dice, and cards, dancing by females, and music parties constitute the leading forms of enjoyment from morning until evening.

*Hand-ball matches.*—A small stick is planted at a fixed spot, and the young men divide themselves into two rival parties. A member of one party stands at the post, while the others stand away from it. The ball which is usually made of coir rope is thrown by a member of one of the opposing party, and on its being struck by the man at the post, the others attempt to catch it before the bounce or stop its onward career. If the ball hits the post, or if any member of the opposing party catches the ball before it has touched the ground, that player's turn is over. Another man takes his place and so on, until all the members of one party have had their turn. Then the rival section begins to play exactly in the same manner and under the same rules as before.

Combats are of two kinds, namely, those between single adversaries, and those held in batches. In the first, the people of one locality divide themselves into two parties. When the match is opened, the leader of one group brings forward a trained pugilist who goes into the intervening open space, between the two groups, challenging any one from the opposite camp to meet him in fair fight. A little while after, some one from the other party takes up the challenge, and then the combat begins. The victor is rewarded with presents of cloths and money by the rich and generous members of the community assembled there. The same process is continued till the close of the day. In Palghat the *Onam* games are of a rougher character; the tenants of certain landlords turn out each under their own leader and engage in sham fights in which there is much rough play.

There is also another amusement, in which a peculiar bow, formed of a strong and slightly elastic wood with a split bamboo finely polished for the string, is used. By means of a



stick, it is possible to produce a kind of musical tone, for which a party is organised to play on it. This entertainment is much admired, and interests the people very much.

(2). *Tiruvâtira* :—This is another important national festival, which falls on the *Tiruvâtira* day in Dhanu (December-January). This concerns the Nayar women, and is said to commemorate the death of *Kâma Déva*, the cupid of Indian mythology, by the burning fire of the third eye of the God Siva. Before day-break the festive day, the young women of the Nayar families hasten to the nearest tank or river for bathing, and during the bath, they amuse themselves with *Tiruvâtira pôttu*, songs accompanied by regular splashing of water, supposed to be symbolical of beating of the breast, on account of their grief for Kama's death. At day-break, they return home, and, gaily dressed and adorned, they go to the nearest temple for worship. After a slight breakfast, they proceed to enjoy the *Uzhinjal* (a swinging apparatus made of bamboo and attached to a horizontal branch of a tree). Immense pleasure is taken in this game. The family dinner is at noon, when bananas, sliced and fried in cocoanut-oil, seasoned with salt, are freely distributed among the friends and relatives assembled there. Ripe plantains, and the sweet preparation of arrow-root flour purified and seasoned with jaggery or sugar and cocoanuts, also form one of the chief items of the feast.

(3). *Vishu* :—Next in importance to the two great national festivals just described, comes *Vishu* on the first of Medam (March-April), which is the astronomical new year's day; and a man's prosperity during the year is believed to depend on his seeing some good and lucky thing on the *Vishu* morning. It is the custom to prepare on the night previous, what is known as *Kani*. A bell-metal vessel (*uruli*) is taken, and in it are arranged a *grantha* or cadjan manuscript, a gold ornament, a new washed cloth, some flowers of the *konna* tree (*Cassia fistula*), some coins in a silver cup, a cocoanut cut into two, a cucumber, some mangoes, and a jack-fruit. On either side of the vessel, are also placed two lamps burning, while there is a plank of wood or some other seat placed in front of it. These are placed in the chief room inside the house, and in the morning, the members of the family, one by one, are taken to the

*Kāni* with their eyes shut, and, when they are near it, are directed to open them and look at it. It is taken from house to house for the benefit of the poor. The *kāranavan* of the family gives small presents of money to the children, servants, and tenants. It is also the time honoured custom of the State that on this day the chief officials shall pay their respects to His Highness the Raja at his residence at Tripunattura, and receive presents of varying amounts. In former times, it was customary for all the subjects of the ruling princes to pay their respects to their royal masters with some new year's gifts. This custom has disappeared, and in its place small presents are made by tenants and dependents to their landlords which generally consist of cocoanut, plantains, and other curry-stuffs—intended probably as a contribution to the celebration. The day is marked by a grand feast for the members of the household as well as for the tenants and other dependents. To the Pulayans (the family workmen) are given paddy or rice, oil, etc., on the previous day to enable them to have their own celebrations.

(4). The *Dasara* or *Ayutha Puja*, called also as *Saraswati Puja*, falls in Kanni (September-October) at the autumnal equinox. It is a festival observed in honour of the Goddess *Saraswati*, and every man worships on the last day the implements of his craft and keeps the day a holiday. It is a nine day's festival and is called *Navaratri*.

(5). *Sivaratri*, which falls in Kumbham (February-March), is also an important festival which is observed in common with the members of other higher castes.

*Important local festivals.*—Of the festivals connected with the temples of the State, the most important is the cock-festival (Bharani) at the Cranganore Kali temple, an account of which is given in my notes on the Valans.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the *Utsavams* (festivals) held once a year in all important temples in the State, there are other popular festivals such as the *Pūrams* at Arattupuzha and Trichur, and the *Kongapada* at Chittur. A short account of the latter is given in the following pages.

The name signifies 'war with Kongan'. The festival falls on the Monday succeeding the Wednesday which immediately follows the new moon in the month of Kumbham (February-March) every year. It will

<sup>1</sup> The Kongapada festival of Chittur.

come off, therefore, either in the latter part of Kumbham or in the former part of the next following month of Meenam according as the new moon in Kumbham occurs earlier or later. The festival is said to be celebrated in commemoration of the victory obtained by the local deity, Bhadrakali, widely known by the local designation of Chittur Bhagavati, in a battle fought with the Kongans, the people of what was known in ancient days as the 'Kongu Desam' comprising the localities included in the present British District of Coimbatore, and lying to the north and east of the Chittur Taluk. The final engagement was fought in the eastern out-skirts of the present town of Chittur, and in it the Kongu chief called in the old songs by the simple name of 'Kongan' was slain by the Goddess with her own hand. The place of engagement is now marked by a small extent of rocky surface, on which is cut the figure of the Bhagavati's sword with which Kongan's head was cut off. The rock also shows two holes nearly a foot in depth, and six inches in diameter. These holes are pointed out by old people as having been made by the hoofs of the fore-legs of the Kongan's mount, which is described as a magnificent buff-bull, when the animal jumped on to the rock in the excitement caused by the fall of its master from its back slain by the Goddess. The buff-bull was also slain on the spot. The whole of the Kongu army was completely routed, and all stampeded to their country in utter confusion. In the course of the battle a few men on the side of the Bhagavati were also killed or wounded, among whom were four important persons belonging to four ancient families in Chittur, who appear to have been the leaders of the local militia. The dead bodies of these four and the wounded were taken from the field of battle and carried to the town and handed over to the respective families, the procession being led by the Goddess, who afterwards commanded the people to celebrate the victory every year, and after entering the temple disappeared into her image within. Tradition speaks thus of the origin of the war. The wealth of the 'Kongu Desom' chiefly consisted of chillies, turmeric, coriander, cumin seed, mustard, areca nut, etc. These commodities used to be exported for sale, in return for paddy, from Kongu Desom to Chittur, Palghat, and other places in large quantities

laden on the backs of mules, asses, bullocks and buffaloes. When once a large caravansary of Kongu laden with such commodities was passing through Chittur, the people of the four *desams* of Chittur, viz., Chittur, Nallepilli, Tattamangalam, and Pattancheri, robbed the Kongans of all their animals and goods. The chief of Kongu, on receiving the information, naturally felt indignant, and despatched an ultimatum to the *Pramánakkars* of Chittur, demanding the surrender of the animals and the articles, failing which, it was said, he would overrun the four *desams*, destroy the houses, and kill all people even including women and children. On receiving the ultimatum, the people went to the temple of the Goddess, and there read the document before the image of the Goddess. It was so read by a member of the Chittedath house, in whose custody, it is said, the original document, written in a copper plate, is still preserved. The reading of the ultimatum, transcribed in a piece of cadjan, before the Bhagavati, is one of the essential functions performed on the night of the Kongapada festival every year, and it is always done by a member of the Chittedath family, who dresses himself up in the fashion of a Kongan and acts the part of the Kongu chief. When the document was read and the people prayed to their Goddess in one voice for protection, the Goddess commanded from within the temple that her 'children' need not fear and that when the Kongan took steps to enforce his ultimatum, she would protect them. On receiving no reply to the ultimatum, the Kongan mobilized his men and crossed the Walayar river, the northern boundary of the Chittur Taluk. The information about the crossing of the boundary was first carried to the Chitturians by the Izhuvans of the vicinity, who were up the palmyra trees early in the morning for the purpose of tapping for toddy, and they in a body climbed down the trees, and without removing their breast protecting leather straps, tapping knives, mallets and ladders, ran to the four *desams* all in excitement. In view of the above fact, the advance portion of the day procession of the Kongapada festival is even to this day made up of a number of persons, mostly of the Chetti caste, belonging to the four *desams*, dressed up in the full toddy-tapping kit of the Izhuvans. They do so every year in pursuance of religious vows made by them for the attainment of particular

objects, such as recovery from illness, success in litigation, birth of children, etc.

When the information of the crossing of the Walayar by the chief of Kongu was communicated to the people of the four *desams* by the Izhuvans, they repaired to the temple in excitement and consternation, when Lo! the temple gates opened of themselves and a beautiful female form dressed in full battle armour, brandishing a shining sword and shedding a resplendent divine light, suddenly emerged out of the image within and marched off direct to meet the advancing army of the Kongan, followed by all the brave men among the people. The battle was fought with the result already mentioned. This battle is enacted on the night of the Kongapada festival as one of its essential functions, accompanied by the beating of numerous Pariah drums, blowing of horns, racing of horses, torch-light processions, besides, of course, the usual mischief-making among the youngsters, but the elders generally control them and stop excesses. In the course of the sham fight, some act as the wounded, some even as the dead and fall down on the field of action. These dead and wounded are immediately taken up and carried by the youngsters to their supposed respective houses in the town accompanied with torch-lights, beating of drums, beating of breasts, and crying and weeping. No outsider is allowed to take part in this sacred function. If an outsider, being possessed with any sudden fit of enthusiasm, attempts to take part in this function, 'woe be to him.' This battle function takes place at about 10 o'clock in the night and lasts for two or three hours. At the end of it, the night procession of the festival begins from the battle-field and moves through the Nayar quarters to the temple, where it reaches just before day-break, when there is a display of fireworks. After day-break, the chief of the place or *Nāduvāzhi* represented by the Chambath house, accompanied by the people, go to the Goddess' temple to offer prayers of love and gratitude to the Bhagavati. The festival is wound up by a performance on the following night called '*Devendra pallu*' in which all the "one hundred Nayars"<sup>1</sup> of Chittur are

1. The Nayar community of Chittur is collectively called by the name of "Chittur Nooru Nayar." It shows that the original village organisation of Chittur consisted of one hundred Nayar houses or families. Although there is a considerable increase in the number of Nayar houses at present, the appellation 'Nooru Nayar' is still used.

supposed to take part under the supervision and guidance of the Srikandath Panikkar, whose family is the military instructor and leader of the people of Chittur. The Panikkar's duty is to train the youths of the 100 houses in the military arts. The performance referred to is, more or less, an exhibition of the bodily prowess of the youths trained by the Panikkar, and at the end of it he receives presents from the *Náduvázhi* and one hundred fanoms—one fanom for each house—from his pupils. The amount of one hundred fanoms is still paid to him every year, and is defrayed out of the collection made for the Kongapada festival for which the Panikkar's family is exempted from the payment of all subscriptions. The training of the youths of the place is begun a few weeks before the Kongapada festival in the *kalari* (military gymnasium) of the Srikandath Panikkar, and the Panikkar takes a prominent part in all the functions connected with the festival from beginning to end.

Once in a few years and commencing on an auspicious day after *Vishu*, this ceremony is performed on a grand scale, in which the Nayars of the town (one male member from almost every house) organised themselves into parties, one party for singing songs in praise of the Goddess Bhagavati, another for dancing before her, and the third for playing on musical instruments. These men have, during this period, to bathe early in the morning, cook their own food and remain under a vow to be ever in devotion to the deity. Preliminary to the celebration of the actual festival, which sometimes run for a number of days, the men are given 41 days' training in the several courses of dancing in the Porayattu family house, one of the four *Pramánakkars* (leading members) of the place, and the final performance takes place in the Pokkumarath house.

In the court-yard of the latter house a large pandal supported on 64 posts, is put, up and in its middle is drawn a floral diagram (*padmam*) over which a lighted brass lamp, and in front of it a stool, are placed with a metal pot of water surmounted by a full pod of cocoanut flowers and a washed cloth arranged in the form of a beautiful crown. The Goddess, who is supposed to be located therein by means of holy *mantrams*, is propitiated every night between 9 and 12 P. M., with offerings and *pujas*, to the accompaniment of drumming, singing,

and dancing. This nightly routine of *pujas*, offerings, dancing, etc., is thus continued for the prescribed number of days.

On the morning following the last day, the votaries purify themselves by a bath and fetch branches of *pala* trees, and a dancing procession is organised, which wends its way through the Nayar streets, accompanied by the Goddess manifested through her *Velichapad*, to the temple of the Goddess, and from there disperse to their respective houses before evening after singing songs of praise and thanks-giving in honour of the Goddess. A pit, 15 feet long, 5 feet broad and 3 feet deep, is then made and filled with ten to fifteen cart-loads of fuel which is burned and reduced to glowing red hot charcoal. Here also is performed a *púja*. At about 4 A. M., the *Velichapad* through whom the Goddess manifests herself, the priests, the votaries, and lastly the caste-men, all walk over the fire several times.

The day dawns and the senior member of the Porayattu family sitting on the stool consecrated to Bhagavati, and covering his head with the silk cloth of the deity, propitiates her with offerings of fruits, cocoanuts, and fowls. The whole ceremony is thus brought to an end. The object of this propitiation is to protect people from the attacks of cholera, small-pox, and other epidemics.

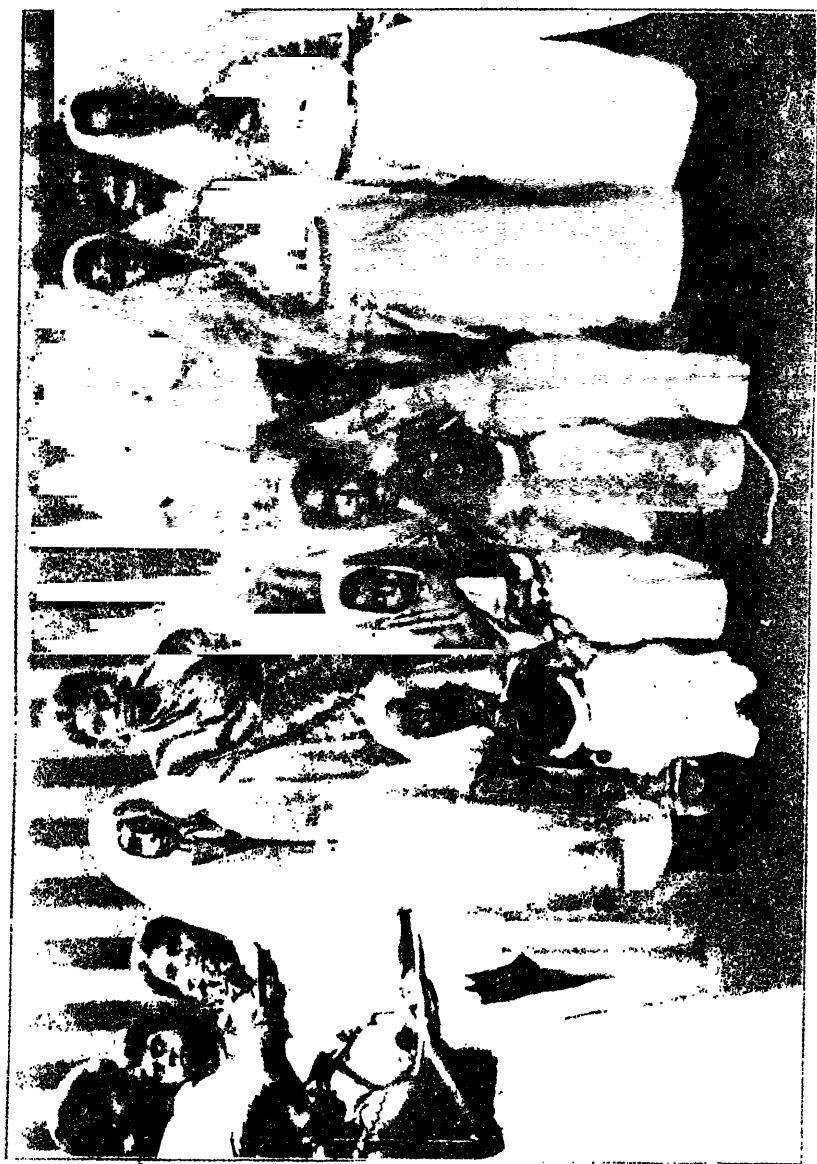
Before closing this part of the subject, it may be noted that the agricultural year begins with the *Vishu* (first of Medam, about the middle of April) at which the hot weather is supposed to terminate. In families where the members pursue agriculture as a profession, they send for the local *Kaniyan* (astrologer), who estimates by astronomical calculations the agricultural prospects and the probable quantity of rain during the ensuing year. He is also asked to choose an auspicious day for ploughing, and on that day the master of the house goes to the seed-store with his Pulayan slaves and takes out a small quantity of each variety of seed, which he puts in a cup made of the leaves of the *kanniram* (*nux vomica*); he then places the cups in a basket near a lamp in the yard and places a small heap of rice around or near it. A new ploughshare fastened to a plough, and a pair of oxen are also brought, and these are painted with rice water. They are then taken in procession to the field, on reaching which the

Agricultural cere.  
monies.

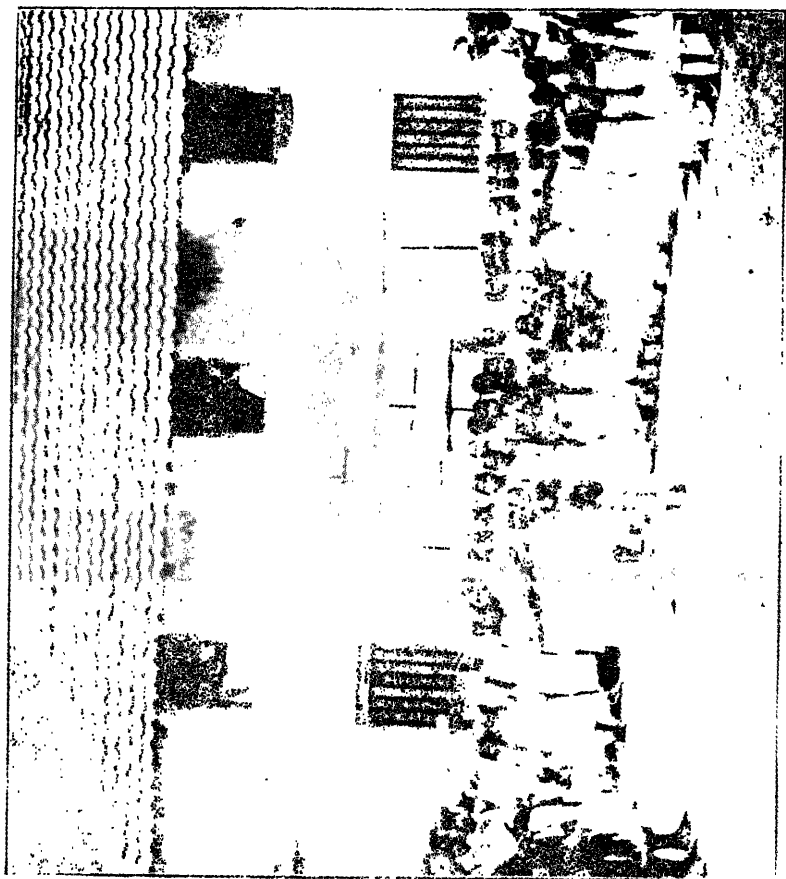


A TYPICAL ARISTOCRATIC NAYAR HOUSE.





A TALL-TYING GROUP OF NAIR GIRLS.



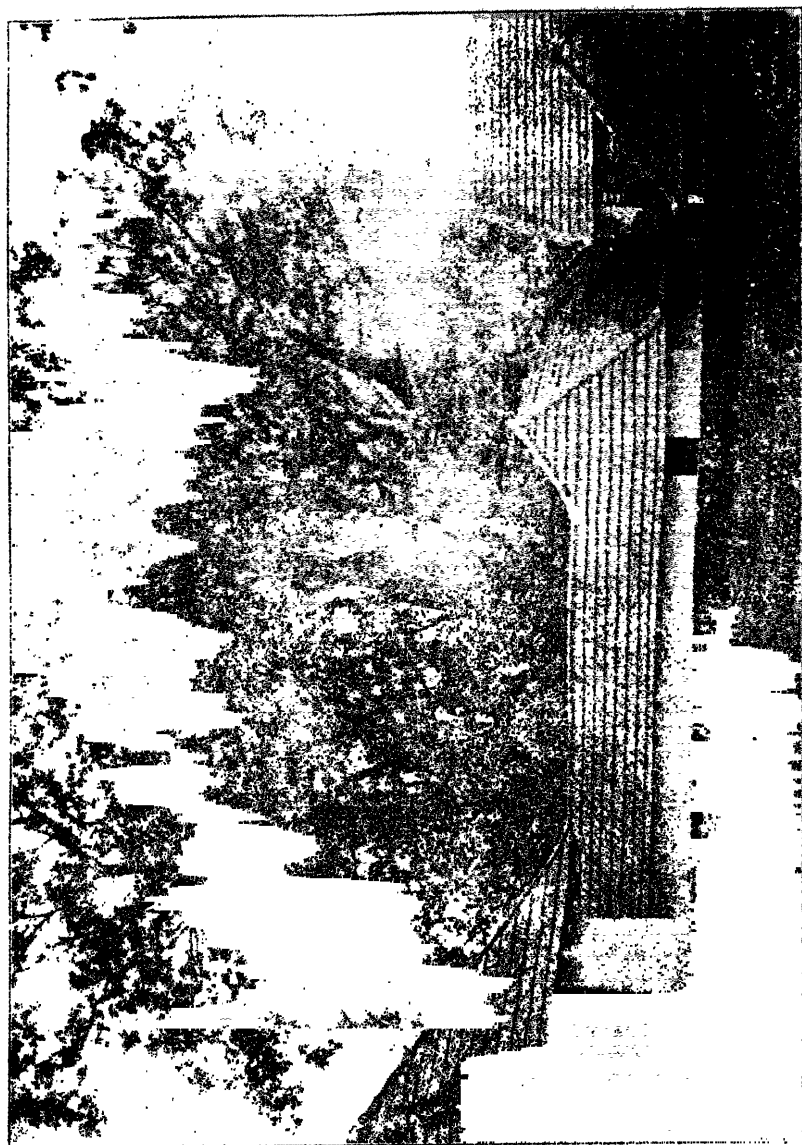
A NAVAR GIRL RETURNING HOME IN PROCESSION AFTER BATH  
ON THE FOURTH DAY AFTER THE FIRST MENSES.



A NAIR GIRL FOR SAMBANDHAM (MARRIAGE) WITH HER  
BRIDESMAIDS.



A PARTY OF NAYARS: TIMING ON BOWSTRINGS DURING ONAM FESTIVAL.



A TYPICAL KAVU.



A VELICHAPADU.



CRANGANORE BHAGAVATHI TEMPLE.

Pulayan head-man raises a mound of earth on which are thrown a little manure and a handful of seed. He then yokes the cattle to the plough and turns a square plot of ground, taking care to have furrows made in it, and the plough dropped on the right. Ganapati is then propitiated with offerings, and the master throws the seed in the furrow, when the Pulaya head-man invokes the blessings of the gods and the deceased ancestors on the seeds that have been sown broadcast, on the cattle that are let loose, and also on the members of the family, and prays them for a good crop, much sunshine, and a good harvest. A cocoanut is then cut on the plough-share, and if the hind portion is larger than the front one, it predicts an excellent harvest. If the nut is cut into two equal portions, the harvest will be moderate; if the cut passes through the eyes of the nut or if no water is left in the cut portions, misfortune is foreboded. The portions of the cocoanut are then picked up with the milk inside them and a leaf of the *tulsi* plant (*Ocymum sanctum*) is dropped into each; if the leaf turns to the right, a prosperous harvest is assured; if to the left, the contrary. The ceremonial concludes with loud shouts and invocations to the gods of husbandry; and the unused seeds are distributed among the workmen.

*Nira*:—The bringing in of the first fruits (*Nira*) is celebrated at the end of Karkadagam (August), previous to which the doors and windows of the houses are cleansed with the leaves of a tree called *paragam* (*Ficus hispida*) and decorated with rice flour, while the walls are white-washed, and the yard smeared with cow-dung. On the gates of the houses are placed various kinds of flowers together with their leaves and branches, viz:—*athi* (*Ficus racemosa*), *ithi* (*Ficus venosa*), *arayil* (*Ficus religiosa*), *peral* (*Ficus Indica*), *illi* (young bamboo leaves), *nelli* (*Phyllanthus Emblica*), *jack* (*artocarpus integrifolia*), and *mango* (*manganefera indica*). On the morning of the ceremonial day, the priest of the temple comes out preceded by a Marar blowing a conch-shell, when a bunch of the ears of paddy already placed by the Pulayans outside the outer wall of the temple is taken by him to the temple with the same Marar blowing the conch. Every house-holder then sends out to the fields a man duly purified by a bath and smeared with ashes to gather some rice. As he brings it to



the gate of the houses, he is met by a woman with a lighted lamp and some leaves on which is placed the rice. This is carried into the yard in procession, while those assembled cry out, 'Fill, fill, increase, fill the house, fill the basket, fill the stomach of the children'. Three times is it carried on a plantain leaf placed on a wooden plank while the lighted lamp is placed on the right. Ganapati is then propitiated with offerings, and stalks of paddy with ears of grain in them are stuck with cow-dung to the various parts of the house, to the agricultural implements, and even to trees. A sumptuous breakfast brings the ceremony to a close.

*Puthari*:—The next ceremony is the formal cooking and eating of the new rice (*Puthari*). It sometimes takes place on the *Nira* day, but generally it is an independent festival. An auspicious day is chosen as soon as the first crop is harvested and threshed—a day which must be before the *Onam*. The rice is cooked and eaten with a special curry made of *tagara* (Cassia tora) peas, the fruit of *puthari chunda* (*Swertia Cherata*), brinjals (*Solanum Melongena*) and green pumpkin.

*Ucharal*:—At the end of Makaram (January-February), when the second crop has been harvested, the year's agricultural operations are supposed to be over, and Mother Earth, *Bhūmi Dévi*, is considered to rest during the hot weather until the first shower begins. At the beginning of this period the Malayali observes a festival in honour of the Goddess' menstruation, which, like the *Roman Februria*, is supposed to take place at this time. On the last three days during this festival, all granaries are closed paddy is not sold, and no implement of agriculture is touched, while even the rice to be eaten during these three days is pounded before-hand. On the first day before sunset the granaries are closed, some thorns and shrubs of broom are fixed to the door and cow-dung and ashes are spread in front of it. The next two days are holidays for all; the house must not be swept, nor the floors smeared with cow-dung, and the garden even may not be swept or watered. On the fourth day the granaries are opened, and a basketful of leaves is taken to the field and burnt with a little manure perhaps to indicate that the cultivator remains in possession.

*Ucharal* is the date on which all agricultural leases should expire, and demand for surrender of property should not be made at any other time, but the courts, by a liberal interpretation, have extended the term up to the day of *Vishu*. Special *Ucharal* festivals are held at Cherpulasseri in the Walluvanad Taluk and near Shoranur, at which straw models of cattle are taken in procession to the temples of Bhagavati.

## CHAPTER IV.

---

# THE SUDRAS OF COCHIN.

---

### A. THE HIGH CASTE SUDRAS (NAYARS)

(Continued).

The high caste Nayars profess Hinduism and follow most of the religious practices of the Brahmans whose influence in matters religious as well as social is supreme all over the State. They worship the superior deities of the Hindu pantheon (Siva, Vishnu, and their consorts, as also Ganapati) in *ambalams* or *kshetrams* (temples) of which there are in the State many that have long been in existence. Everywhere in the State, the caste-men and women with their children may be seen going to worship the deities in their local temples both morning and evening after their baths in the public tanks. It is only after this worship that they take their meals, and seldom do they depart from this rule. They also adore the minor deities, namely, Subramanian, Ayyappan, Sástha or Vettakkorumakan, Bhagavati, as well as Kali, the goddess of small-pox, and malignant demons, such as, Kutticháttan, Mundian, Gulikan, Gantákaranan. But these deities or demons are located in *kávus*, mere unpretentious structures with the characteristic tiled roofs and ornamental gables. These deities are represented by carved or uncarved pieces of stone placed on elevated seats beneath the *ál* (*Ficus religiosa*), the *pala* (*Echites scholaris*), or the *kánniram* (*strychnos*), and the priest is usually a non-Vedic Namburi, an Elayad, a Músad, or one of the Sudra castes. The deities such as Subramanian and others above mentioned, are the sons of Siva, and require no animal sacrifices, but the host of demons require to be propitiated with offerings of goats, or fowls, while their wishes are often interpreted by oracles, who are known as *velichapads*.

The Cochin State, as well as Malabar and Travancore, is the land of magic, sorcery, and witchcraft, and as well as

belief in animism, and all these are largely mixed up with the religion of the Nayars. Animism refers to the belief that man passes through life surrounded by a ghastly company of powers, elements, and tendencies, impersonal in character, mere shapeless phantoms of which no image can be made and no idea can be formed. Most of these have departments or spheres of influence of their own—one presides over cholera, another over small-pox, yet another over cattle disease, some dwell in rocks, others haunt trees, and others again haunt rivers, whirlpools and waterfalls. All of them require to be diligently propitiated by reason of the ills and calamities which they bring about, and the essence of these practices is magic.

Evidence of a wide-spread belief in the worship of ancestors is to be seen in the *kistavens* (*thoppi kallús*)—the rock caves containing the sepulchral urns found in the jungles and other parts of the State—in the ceremonies performed and the offerings made for the spirits of the dead. They are worshipped even now in special *kávús*, sometimes even in small out-houses or special rooms in the house on new moon days or *Sankrántis*, and there are also periodical commemorations on the anniversaries of the ancestor's death. Dead ancestors are also represented by stones or small images of gold or silver kept in the middle room of the Nayar houses, and offerings of food and drink are made to them on new moon and *Sankránti* nights. Animistic again is the worship of Káli or Bhagavati who presides over small-pox, cholera, and the thousand maladies that flesh is heir to, the worship of animals and plants and lastly the belief in exorcism and witchcraft in which Brahmans also share.

Serpent shrines (*Nágattán kávús* or *Nagakóttas*) are to be found in the compounds of every Nayar house in the Cochin State, and their worship occupies a prominent place in the religious life of the Nayars and other castes. The following mythical origin is ascribed to the adoration of serpents in the Keralólpathi.

The first Aryan colonists settled by Parasurama found Kerala absolutely uninhabitable, and finding it impossible to improve their condition, returned to their old country. After their departure, the Nágas (or serpent gods) of the lower world or *Páthála* took possession of the partly reclaimed land and settled

thereon. The early colonists, on a second venture, finding the land occupied, commenced a war against the Nágas, but Parasuram acting as arbitrator, decided in favour of the early colonists, and ordered that they should set apart a corner of every compound as an abode of the serpent gods. He further ordained that these allotted places were to remain virgin-ground, untouched by the blade of the knife or the prong of the fork, while the under-wood and the creepers were to be allowed to grow in wild profusion, and to such the name *kávu* (grove) was given. In it are generally planted several stone idols of serpents placed on a stone-basement called *chitrakúdam*, the whole being held sacred and reserved by a low wall round it to prevent cattle or children straying into that space. The propitiation of serpents is deemed essential to the prosperity and well-being of every house-holder, and periodical offerings are made to them, while the neglect of these is considered to cause leprosy, sterility, or ophthalmia, among the members of the family. These serpents are therefore regarded as tutelary deities of the family, and the gods along with the shrines are conveyed with the property and frequently specified in deeds of transfer.

The high priest of the serpent cult is the Pámbu Mékkát Nambuthiri, who lives in a house full of cobras which are said to be harmless to his family. Whenever an image of a serpent from a grove has to be removed from one place to another, he is sent for on the belief that he alone can do it after due propitiation and offerings, and any tree that is cut down for this removal must be sent to the local temple to be used as fuel. The serpent grove should not be polluted by a member of the low caste, or by a woman during her menses; and when it is so polluted or otherwise spoiled, a member of the family of the Nambuthiri priest has to be informed. He gazes into a vessel filled with oil, points out the evil and suggests the remedy. The ninth asterism in every month is specially selected for snake worship in Nayar families, when offerings of milk and water are made to them. It is said that the approach of a woman during her menses will cause serpents to vacate the grove because of the impurity, and Pulluvans are required to sing songs and perform certain ceremonies to cause them to re-enter the shrines. Images of these serpents are sometimes

made even of gold or silver and consecrated for worship in Brahman houses. They are also presented to Brahmans by those on whose date of birth an eclipse falls, and this is done to mitigate the wrath of Ráhu.

Cases of snake bite are of frequent occurrence in the northern parts of the State where snakes abound; and nowhere else is the Hindu treatment so skillfully practised as to effect a radical cure by medicines and incantations. When information regarding snake bite is conveyed to a physician, or a bitten man is taken to him, the latter can, by the chirping of a lizard or other tokens, make out the nature of the case and also whether it is curable or not. It is said that physicians should not go to a patient's house, and the following story is given in explanation:—

Once when the emperor Parikshit was ordained to be bitten by the great serpent Takshaka, the latter set out in the disguise of a Brahman. On his way he met another Brahman, who, on enquiry, turned out to be a physician on his way to cure the king. With a view to test his ability, Takshaka bit a tree which was at once reduced to ashes, but the physician removed the poison, and the tree regained its former state. Takshaka, admiring his ability, loaded him with immense wealth and dissuaded him from going to the king. He also made him promise that he should never volunteer his services in such matters unless patients were taken to him. In some families the profession is hereditary, the most prominent among them being the families of Kokkára Nambuthiri and Máliyakkal Karta.

In every village are to be found guardian deities that protect the villagers from the malevolence of demons which are supposed to occupy an intermediate place between gods and men. The temples of the Nayers in which are enshrined these village deities or *Gráma-dévatás* are far less imposing than those of the Brahmans and are called *kúvus*. The deities commonly represented are the consort of Siva or some manifestation of that female divinity, and Ayyappan or Sasta; and these are supposed to keep in subjection the demons and spirits which are ever prone to do harm to the people of the village. Thus, though the demons are objects of worship, the propitiation of the guardian deities and the festivals held in their honour are considered to be sufficient to curb

Tutelary deities.

the malignant propensities of those spirits. The most popular of the festivals is the *Mandalam*, which begins on the first of Vrischigam (middle of November) and lasts for forty-one days. In addition to the daily *pújas* to the image of Bhagavati by Brahman priests, special rites and ceremonies (*Kúlamezhuthum Páttum*) are also performed by a particular class of Sudras to the figure of the goddess made on the floor by means of coloured powders, while the devotees sing songs in her praise to the accompaniment of lute-like musical instruments. A man in a fantastic dress with an array of jingling bells round his loins, heavy sounding bell-metal anklets on each foot and a scythe-shaped sword in his hand impersonates the goddess and dances to the sound of tom-toms round the figure of the goddess Bhadrakáli on the floor. The *Velichapád*, as he is called, becomes highly excited and in his frenzy sometimes even cuts his forehead and causes it to bleed. He speaks, or rather the deity speaks through him, in broken yet commanding tones wholly unlike his own and makes oracular responses to the enquiries addressed to him.

On a night in the latter part of the month of Dhanu (early in January), a golden image of the goddess is placed on the back of a big decorated elephant, and, amidst the beating of drums, the firing of pop-guns and crackers, is taken out in procession. The elephant with the goddess is supported on each side by elephants whose numbers vary according to the means of the villagers. The *Velichapád* is indispensable and is accompanied by a group of well-dressed women and girls, each carrying in her hand a plate (*tálam*) full of rice and a light placed on the top of it. The festival ends with a display of fire-works, and the ceremony closes with the sacrifice of goats or fowls. On the same principle but on different lines are celebrated various propitiatory and sacrificial festivals in honour of the other aforesaid deities. Generally, after the harvests, the *Velichapúds* are taken out in procession to the Hindu houses in each village to receive offerings of a measure of paddy and small coins.

*Sásta* or *Ayyappan*.—According to Keralólpathi, Parasurama with the object of protecting the newly created country (Kérala) is said to have established many temples and dedicated them to this deity. The most important of these is at Sabarimala in the Chengannur Taluk of Travancore, which

attracts a very large number of pilgrims during the *Mandala pūja* from Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. This deity is peculiar to these parts, where he has the largest number of worshippers.<sup>1</sup>

The worship of the tutelary deities above described is to a very great extent the outcome of a belief in, and a constant fear of, the influence of demons and evil spirits on mankind, a belief which has existed from a very remote period. The worship of demons is confined to the lower orders and has no connection with the higher forms of Hinduism, and yet this belief in demons is so wide-spread that not even the Brahmans are free from it. In every part of the State, in Malabar and in Travancore, magicians and sorcerers, from the highest Nambuthiri to the lowest Parayan, find employment in exorcising their baneful influences. Among the Pánans, Mannáns and Parayans, magic, sorcery, and witchcraft are a hereditary profession, and among the Nambuthiripáds of Kallúr, Káttumatam, and Chennamangalam are to be found special family deities by whose aid they are supposed to avert the actions of demons and spirits. It is curious to note that there are exorcists even among Christians and Mussalmans; and another interesting fact in connection with this is that the high caste Hindus exercise their magic influence by propitiating, by the aid of their sacred *mantrams*, the more refined and sublime manifestations of God, while the low caste-men propitiate Káli in her more hideous aspects. The ordinary people make a distinction between *Bhútas* on the one hand, and *Prétas* and *Pisáchas* on the other. The former are regarded as the messenger of Siva and his consort Sakti, while the latter are the souls of the departed who have died a violent and unnatural death by suicide, murder, or by drowning, and they are believed to be demons who wander about inflicting injury upon mankind in various ways. At noon and at midnight are the chief hours when they attempt to seize or possess those who walk in lonely places or take shelter under tamarind trees or on the sides of tanks. At night the demons are believed to call loudly in order to allure people out of their homes into distant jungles and there to kill them; hence, as a rule, at night a call is not responded to until it is repeated a fourth

1. Vide Religion of the Izhevans, Vol. I, page 313.



time. At the period of puberty and after child-birth women are especially liable to the attacks of these ærial beings. Charms and incantations, offerings and sacrifices, are the most requisite to counteract the evils that demons do, and iron rings, iron staffs, and leather shoes, are some of the specifics that help to keep the demons at a distance.

They make their abode chiefly in the palmyra and *pála* trees, but some of them occupy even dwelling houses. Others take the shape of human beings, while yet others possess human beings.

Their name is legion, and they exist by the offerings of their votaries and their tormented victims. Against the machinations of these demons, the sorcerers and exorcists bring to bear the influence of their special guardian deities who in turn must be propitiated with offerings before they can be called upon to use their beneficial strength. In the case of the evil spirit of him who has died an unnatural death, a Brahman magician purifies the spirit by means of certain ceremonies called *Tilahóma* (an offering of sesamum seeds to *agni* or fire). A Chendus Nambuthiri presides at such ceremonies and transfers the spirit to an image of gold, silver, or wood which is afterwards placed in a Vishnu temple or enshrined in a small building put up for that purpose, there to rest in peace.

In the State, temples are dedicated to various demons, the chief among them being the Avanangáttil Cháttan in Triprayar. The temples dedicated to the small-pox demon correspond to the *Péy Kóvils* or devil temples of the Tamil Districts. In these temples are to be found the instruments and symbols of demon worship, the dancing sticks or wands, the priests' garments, tridents, etc., whilst in others there is nothing save the images of demons. There is also an officiating priest, who is the devil driver and the devil dancer, and who at times even becomes a *Velichapád* inspired to communicate to the votaries, who consult him in times of illness and calamity, the wishes and intentions of that particular demon.

To a Hindu all organic life is sacred, and his creed is not to injure any living thing, while among the animals worshipped by him the cow occupies the first place. The cow is *Kámadhenu*, the giver of all things, and hence whenever a cow is approached, it is touched

Worship of animals  
and plants.

with the hand which is, in token of veneration, then raised to the head. Milk, curd, ghee, urine and dung are mixed together and used for purificatory ceremonies; and the images of gods are anointed with this holy mixture called *panchagavyam*. Small doses of it are even taken internally, and it is considered an antidote against poison, besides being prescribed as a *prdyaschit* or expiation for offences against caste, whereas the sprinkling of water mixed with dung removes sin or pollution from all persons, places, or things, and purifies them. The bull, the vehicle of Siva, is also held sacred, and a statue of it in granite is either placed in front of the image of Siva or in a separate shrine, and is worshipped as a God. The lizard associated with Siva, the monkey with Hanumán, the Garuda (the brahmany kite) with Vishnu, and the peacock of Subramania are a few of the other animals of Hindu veneration.

Of the birds of ill omen, one species of owl called *pullu* is much dreaded because of the belief that it causes an illness to children which results in emaciation. At the sound of its screeching, children are taken into a room to avoid its injurious gaze. Various are the propitiatory ceremonies performed by specialists to secure its good-will and to prevent its doing harm to babies; and amulets are worn by children as a preventive against its evil influences. Its hideous screeches are always associated with death.

Among trees, some are worshipped while others are used for *pūjas* or sacrifices. Among the former may be mentioned the pipal (*Ficus religiosa*), a tree which is held in veneration by the Hindus. Persons afflicted with maladies or whose planets are unfavourable, go round a pipal tree, seven, twelve, forty-one, or one hundred and eight times, muttering prayers and burning camphor and other incense at its foot or perchance engage Brahmans to do so, in the belief, that it will cure disease or counteract evil influences. The *vilva* (*Ægle marmelos*), whose leaf of triple form is supposed to represent the three eyes of Siva, and symbolise his triple function of production, destruction, and re-production, and the *tulsi* (*Ocimum sanctum*), which is sacred to Vishnu, are also worshipped. In front of every house, generally on the eastern side, or in the central yard of a quadrangular structure, is a stone or mud altar, on which *tulsi* or the *vilva* is planted and watered every day, and is worshipped by the inmates of the house. From

the *tulsi* are also made rosaries, which, in addition to being an aid to prayers, are also used as ornaments for the neck. Among the trees used for *pūjas* or sacrifices are the sandalwood, the *plāsu* (*Butea frondosa*), the *rudrāksham* (*Elæocarpus lanceolatus*), the *darbha* (*Poa cynosuroides*), the *karuka* (*Agrostis linearis*), the *thumba* (*Leucas Indica*), *chembarutti* (shoeflower, *Hibiscus Rosa sinensis*), *erikku* (*Calotropis gigantea*), *thechi* (*Chrysanthemum*), and the several species of lotus and jessamine; and of these one and all are extensively used for medicinal purposes.

The belief in demons and the habit of attributing all that cannot be easily accounted for to supernatural powers, have built up an edifice of folk-tales that would prove of great interest to students of folk-lore, some of which are given below:—

The eclipse is ascribed to the devouring of the sun or moon by the huge serpent *Rāhu*, and while it lasts, a kind of pollution is observed by the people, for during the period of eclipse, food and drink are supposed to acquire poisonous properties.

People who hear stories of *Rāmāyana*, while lying on their beds, will become blades of grass in their next birth.

Will-o'-the-wisps are accounted for, as lights emitted by a kind of precious stone (*mānikka kallu*) from the mouths of serpents, which, owing to their long life, are believed to have acquired the art of flying. Popular belief is that some serpents have been blowing for ages upon gold, embedded in the strata of the earth, and converting it into precious stones of the nature above mentioned. They keep them in their mouths, and acquire the power of flying in the air, with the stones shining brilliantly when they open their mouths.

When the crow and the fowl were first created, they were asked which they preferred, personal beauty or long life. The fowl preferred the former, and the crow the latter. Hence it is that the crow is said to possess a long lease of life.

The crow is supposed to possess only one eye, though apparently it has two. One eye-ball is said to move first in one socket, then into the other as necessity requires. The story is connected with a strange myth.

During the exile of Rama, Lakshmana and Sita, they lived chiefly by hunting. One day, when Sita was drying some pieces of flesh, a crow accidentally pecked at one of Sita's ruddy toes, taking it for one of the blood red pieces of meat. She thereupon told her husband about it, who shot an arrow at the crow and blinded it in one eye, and thenceforth its descendants have been blind in one eye.

When the great Rama was constructing the dam across the sea, for his large army to cross over to Lanka (Ceylon) to wage war with the *Asura*, Ravana, and to recover his wife Sita, a small squirrel was found working hard without food. This attracted the notice of the great Rama who took pity on him and gently rubbed him on the back with three fingers as a sign of affection, and the impressions thus left became the black and white lines, which the whole species possessed thereafter.

*Ari-prāvu* or the common house-dove has a story told of it. These birds, male and female, are always found in pairs together. Once, it is said, they were quarrelling about a game, and the quarrel ended in the desertion by the male bird of his mate, who recognizing the mistake called for him, and her cries are said to be ever calling out for her mate.

Rain, Thunder and Lightning:—In the aerial regions are huge monsters of extraordinary strength (*Kālaméghattanmār*) who are supposed to possess two horns with the aid of which all the water from the earth is drawn up during the summer, to be spat out in the rainy season at Indra's (Rain God's) bidding. Lightning is caused by the friction of the horns, while engaged in the task of spitting out water. Another version of the story as to the origin of lightning is, that it is caused by the brandishing of Indra's sword, while engaged in ordering the monsters to supply the earth with water.

It is said that a new lobe grows on to the liver of a tiger every year it lives, and therefore by an examination of that organ, the age of the animal can be accurately determined.

Evil spirits are believed to have the power at times of changing men into tigers, such being distinguished by having no tails.

The claws and even the teeth of the tiger are used as charms against witchcraft and the evil-eye. They may frequently be seen set in silver, and worn round the necks of

children. Tiger's whiskers have also the same efficacy against demoniacal influence. The flesh is eaten as medicine, while the skin boiled in gingelly oil and strained into the ear, removes deafness.

There is a common belief that, should the nest of a brahmany kite be found, and one of the young ones be attached to it by a string, the squall breaks away, generally leaving a portion of the line attached to the nest as it becomes strong. The nest which is formed of sticks should then be thrown into a running stream, when, if any of the sticks that compose it float against the current, they will, on being applied to any fetters, cause them immediately to fly into a thousand fragments.

The owl which is an emblem of wisdom in Europe, and the goose that of stupidity, completely change their respective places in the east, the former becoming a symbol of stupidity, the latter that of wisdom.

The hooting of the owl heard at night, has, in all parts of the world and in all ages, been considered ominous of evil, and is consequently much dreaded. In Cochin, it is generally believed, that the hooting of an owl betokens an impending calamity or even the death of an individual near whose abode its loathsome cry is heard; and so, dwellers in the neighbouring houses at once turn out and drive it away.

Jack-o'-lantern:—These are called *Kollykattu Pisáchus* (ghosts which emit fire from their mouths), and make their appearance on the side of tanks, rivers, and marshy places during rainy or foggy nights. They fly away or disappear at the sight of men and are much dreaded by the people.

Preëminent among the trees in the town of Cochin, and towering above all others along the sea-shore and sides of the back-water are the cocoanut palms (*cocos nucifera* linn), every portion of which, from the leaves to the roots, may be turned to some useful purpose.

There is a tradition that the Raja of Benares, who was a strenuous worshipper of one supreme God, and rejected the custom of making offerings to inferior divinities, became, in course of time, almost equal to the Gods, and created many of the grains now in common use. As his powers increased, so did his ambition, and he meditated creating another species of human beings very superior to anything then existing in the world. But after he had completed its head, the demi-gods became alarmed and

prevailed on him to cease his work. The head was therefore transformed into a cocoanut which was henceforth to be one of the most useful of all trees in the vegetable kingdom, and was dedicated to Ganésa, the patron of science and learning.

The Nayers generally burn their dead bodies, while those of children under two or three years of age as well as those of persons who have died of small-pox or cholera are buried. When a Nayar is at the point of death, the members of the house-hold and friends who may be present; one by one, pour into his mouth a few drops of Ganges or other holy water or *kanji* water, from a tiny cup made of a leaf or two of the *tulsi* plant. While doing this, they hold in the hand a piece of gold or a gold ring and the water is supposed to touch the gold, before it enters the mouth of the dying person. Sometimes, a *fanam* or gold piece is placed in the mouth, and the lips are closed.

As soon as death has taken place, the corpse is removed from the cot or bed and carried to the *vadakkini*, a room at the northern end of the house, where it is placed on long plantain leaves spread out on the floor, and while it is there, a lamp is kept burning both day and night. One member of the family holds the head in his lap, while another the feet in the same way, and here it is that the neighbours come to have a last look at the dead. All the while, the names of gods or sacred texts are loudly recited in the hope that the soul may quit the world with recollections of God which would serve as a passport to Heaven. Immediately death occurs, the members of the house and the relatives assembled there burst out into loud lamentations, announcing the sad event to the caste-men of the village who attend at once. When preparations for the funeral have been made, the dead body is carried to the *nadumittam* or central yard of the house, or if there is no central yard, to the front yard where it is again laid on plantain leaves. It is then washed, anointed and neatly clothed, and the usual marks of sandal-wood paste and ashes, as in life, are made. The senior member of the deceased's family along with others including the sons-in-law, daughters-in-law, and all the relatives, place new cotton cloths over the dead, and these are used for tying up the corpse before being taken to the cremation ground. Before removal, another ceremony called *Para Nirakkuka* (filling up *para*, a measure thrice the size of a gallon)

is performed. All the members of the family take part in this ceremony under the direction of the priest who belongs to the *Athikurussi* class. The ceremony consists in filling up three *para* measures with paddy and one *edangali* of raw rice, and placing them near the corpse together with a burning lamp of local manufacture.

A mango tree is cut, and as much fuel as is necessary for the burning of the dead is collected and placed at the south-eastern corner of the compound which is always set apart for the burning or burial of the dead. A small pit about the size of the dead body is dug. Across this are placed three long stumps of the plantain tree, one at each end and one in the middle, and on these the foundation of the pyre is laid. The dead body which is placed on a bamboo bier is carried to the cremation ground and placed on the pyre with its head to the south, then fuel is laid over it, together with a little camphor, sandal-wood and ghee, if the family can afford the expense. Before the body is placed on the pyre, the *anandaravan*, the member of the family immediately junior to the deceased, tears from the new cloths laid on the corpse, a piece sufficient to go round his own loins. He wears it round his waist and holds in his hand or tucks into his cloth at the waist, a piece of iron, generally a long key. It must be noted here, that all those members of the family who are older than the deceased may not take any part whatsoever in the funeral ceremony or in any subsequent ceremony after the cremation or burial, but all adult males junior to the deceased should be present when the pyre is lighted. The deceased's younger brother, or in his absence, his nephew (sister's son), sets fire to the pyre beginning at the head of the corpse; but if a son is left by the deceased, he sets fire to the pyre beginning at the feet. In the case of a woman, the son has to set fire to the pyre, or in his absence, one junior in age to her has the right to do so. It is a matter of great importance that the whole pyre should burn at once, and great care towards that end is taken. While the corpse is being consumed, all the members of the family go and bathe in a tank (there is always one in the compound of a Nayar house). The eldest man who has the piece of cloth and the key carries a pot of water, and all return to the place of cremation. When the body is almost consumed by fire, the senior member carries the pot of water thrice round it, letting

the water leak out by making holes in the pot as he walks round. On completing the third round he dashes the pot on the ground close to the spot where the head of the dead had been placed. This circling round (*Kumbhapradakshinam*) is said to symbolize that the deceased has had his ablution in the water of the Ganges. Then the chief mourner and others bathe in a tank or river, perform an ablution of water (*Udaka-kriya*) to a piece of *karuka* grass stuck up to represent the spirit of the dead. A small image of the deceased is then made out of raw rice, and to this image a few grains of rice and gingelly seed are offered. When this has been done, the relatives and the neighbours who have been there depart, taking care to bathe themselves before entering their houses.

The ceremony next in importance is the *Séshakriya* (making offerings to the deceased's spirit) which begins on the second day after death and continues for seven days, the particulars of which are as follows:—All the male members of the family, junior to the deceased, bathe and return home. The eldest of them who has the torn cloth and the piece of iron, together with the others, assemble in the central court-yard of the house, where there has been prepared by their *enangan* Chithayan, some boiled rice, a few gingelly seeds, a few leaves of the *cherula*, some curd, and a small measure of paddy, rice, and turmeric. All these are placed in the north-east corner with a lamp locally made. A piece of palmyra leaf, about a foot or so in length and the width of a finger is taken, one end after being knotted, is placed in the ground, and the long end is left sticking up. This leaf represents the deceased, and the rice and other things are offered to it. The following is the belief concerning the use of the palmyra leaf:—There are in the human body ten humours, *Váiyus*, *Pránan*, *Apánan*, *Sámanan*, *Udánan*, *Vyánan*, *Nágan*, *Kúrman*, *Krikalan*, *Déva-dathan* and *Dhananjayan*. There are *Desarayus* or ten airs. When cremation was performed for the first time, all excepting the last were consumed in the fire, while the last flew up and settled on a palmyra leaf. This was discovered by some Brahman sages, who by means of *mantrams* forced it into the palmyra leaf. So it is thought that by making offerings to this leaf for seven days, the spirit of the deceased will be pacified.

The place where the leaf is to be fixed is first cleaned carefully, and the leaf is then placed in the centre of the prepared



surface. The men, when they return from their baths, bring with them some harialli grass (*karukapullu*); and making an obeisance with the right knee on the ground, they spread some grass near the strip of palmyra leaf, and rings made of the leaf are also worn by all those present. The eldest of the *anandaravans* or nephew then makes offerings of water, turmeric and leaves of the *cherula*, as well as balls of boiled rice with a few gingelly grains and curds poured over it. As boys are forbidden to make the offerings, should the nephew chance to be a boy, it is considered sufficient for him to touch one of the elders who, under those circumstances, makes the offerings. The whole is then covered with a plantain leaf, a lighted wick is waved near it, and some milk is poured under the leaf. This is left undisturbed for some seconds, after which the leaf is tapped gently with the back of the fingers of the right hand; it is then removed and torn in two at its mid-rib, one piece being placed on either side of the *pindams*. And now the ceremony is over for the day. The agnates rise and remove their wet clothing, sometimes even bathe again. The torn cloth is tied round a pillar near the basket covering the leaf, and the leaf is uncovered every day for seven days at the same hour for the performance of the ceremony. At the end of each day's ceremony the offerings of rice balls left are unguarded for a short time to allow the crows to feed on them; after which they are removed by the female members of the *tarawád*, who are junior to the deceased, and the eldest of them carries the offerings to the side of a tank and throws them into the water. It is believed that if the crows take them, the spirit is pleased. Should the crows leave any remains, they must be thrown into the water, as dogs must not eat the offerings.


During the seven days the house of the deceased and all its inmates are considered to be under pollution, and the members of that *tarawád* may not go to any other house nor can members of other *tarawáds* visit them without polluting themselves; but this pollution can be removed by bathing. During this period, however, as a rule, the *káranavan* of the family receives visits of condolence from relatives and friends to whom he is at home on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Here it must be said, that in some cases, the visitors bring with them small presents in money or in kind to help the *káranavan* with the expenditure to which the funeral rites put him.

On the third day after the death, all those who are related to the *tarawád* by matrimonial alliances combine and give a feast to the inmates of the house and to the neighbours. This is called the *Patni kanji*. On the seventh day a return feast is given by the members of the *tarawád*, to all relations and neighbours. Between the seventh and the fourteenth day after death, no ceremonies are performed, but the members of the family are under pollution, and then on the fourteenth day comes the *Sanchayanam*. It is the disposal of the calcined remains, the ashes of the deceased. The male members of the *tarawád* go to the place of cremation, and picking up the unburnt bones of the deceased, place them in an earthen pot which is sundried—not burnt in the usual way—and cover up the mouth of the pot with a piece of cloth. The eldest carries it and, followed by the rest, proceeds to the nearest river (it must be a running stream) into which it is thrown. In some places the bones are collected on the seventh and preserved in a pot which, when convenient, is carried to Benares, Rameswaram, Gaya, or to Thirunelly in Wynad and there deposited as above described. Such a disposal is called *Ashtagaya-Sradham*, and puts an end to the need of all earthly ceremonies—nor is there any need to continue the annual ceremony for that person. The belief is that the collection and careful disposal of the ashes of the dead gives peace to the departed spirit, which will not thereafter injure the living members of the *tarawád*.

On the fifteenth day is the purificatory ceremony at which a man of the *Attikurissi* clan officiates as priest. In the morning the members of the family wear cloths washed by a *Vellan* (washerman) and assemble together for purification by the Nayar priest who throws on them, both before and after bathing, paddy, rice, gingelly seeds, and the holy mixture (milk, oil, etc.). The Elayad or the Brahman priest performs the *Punyáham* or purification of the house, well, etc., and on the sixteenth day he takes the place of the priest. On the evening of the fifteenth day and the morning of the sixteenth, the priests and the villagers are sumptuously fed, and presents of cloth are made to the latter and money to the former. In the Chittur Taluk, the priestly functions are sometimes performed by the Elayad, and *Deeksha* (leaving the body unshaved for forty-one days or a year) is observed by the nephew and the son of the deceased. The one who is under this mark of mourning makes offerings of rice balls

and gingelly seeds every morning after his bath to the departed spirit, and he must abstain from women, meat, alcoholic drinks, and from chewing betel and tobacco. When the *Deeksha* is observed, the ashes of the dead are not deposited as described above until the last day of *Deeksha*, the forty-first or the 365th day after death. When *Deeksha* is observed for a year, the ceremony called *bali* is performed every day. The last day of *Deeksha* is one of festivity, and after *bali*, the man under *Deeksha* is shaved. Then at the end of every year, the annual *Sradha* or the commemorative rite is performed for the deceased. Rice ball offerings are made and given to the crows, when clapping of hands announces to these birds that the rice is being thrown for them, and should they come and eat it, it is considered that the spirit of the deceased is pleased with the offering and is not likely to be troublesome. But, on the other hand, should they not come and eat it, it is evident that the spirit is displeased and the *tarawád* had better be on the look out. In the case of those who have committed suicide or met death by violent means, the spirits are always particularly vicious and troublesome to the *tarawád*, invariably rendering miserable some unfortunate member of it. Unless the spirits are pacified, they will ruin the family, so a Brahman priest is invited to satisfy them by means of *Tilahóman*, a rite in which sacrificial fire is raised, and ghee and gingelly seeds are among the offerings.



## CHAPTER V.

---

### THE SUDRAS OF COCHIN.

---

#### A. THE HIGH CASTE SUDRAS (NAYARS)

(Continued).

Among the high caste Nayars, the recognition of caste by occupation is not possible. They were at one time a military caste, and as a relic of it, the small force of infantry maintained by the State is still known by the name of the ancient military caste of Kerala. Aristocratic military leaders of the feudal ages, who then derived their incomes chiefly from landed property, in these times of uninterrupted peace and tranquillity, are but shadows of their former state. Some of them are almost penniless, and while a few families maintain their ancient position, most of them have lost prestige and influence. Among the lower classes of Nayars, there are sub-castes who by occupation were potters, weavers, oil-mongers, and copper-smiths; but the men of these sub-castes have abandoned their traditional occupations, and even consider it a disgrace to be known by their original occupation. This is partly due to the acquisition of wealth by a number of the caste-men, and partly to their attempts to rise in the social scale by engaging themselves in other walks of life. There are again some classes (*Illakkárs* or *Sudras*) of Nayars who rendered personal services to the Nambuthiris or to their own community, and the tendency has been to discontinue the services and take to other more respectable calling.

The Nayars numbered 1,11,837 at the last Census, and of these, 28,786 are agriculturists. These include tenant farmers, agricultural labourers, growers of special products and those connected with agricultural training and forests. Very few take to manufacture and trade. The sentiments generated by the old feudalism, a rigid conservatism of caste and their residence in rural areas account for it to a great extent.

The Nayars are the second in the list of the castes as regards learning; and only five per cent. of the population belong to the learned professions, but they are found in all departments of public service. The community is now availing itself largely of the benefits of modern education, and the members are fast becoming conspicuous in every walk of life. In every department of the State, in all the learned professions, they form a respectable majority, and the only people who successfully compete with them are the Brahman immigrants from the other coast. Though there are extensive landholders and substantial farmers among them, a very large majority of the caste-men are really very poor, being either petty farmers, agricultural labourers or day labourers, earning wages at the rate of four to five annas a day. Even women of the poorer classes do agricultural work. Domestic servants in Hindu families are almost wholly Nayars, but none of them are artisans, weavers or potters.

The Nayars seldom eat before their bath or before worshipping in the temple close at hand. Their meals are generally three in number, namely, breakfast which is taken early in the morning, a midday meal between eleven and twelve, and another between seven and eight in the evening, but this meal is generally taken by children between five and six. The breakfast usually consists of *kanji* or rice gruel with some pickles and *pappadam* (round wafers made of the meal of the kidney-bean). Coffee is becoming popular among the Nayars, and this beverage is now often taken for breakfast in well-to-do families. They do not recognize any danger in the use of it, and individuals of all ages indulge in it, so much so that it is even given to young infants. The mid-day meal, which is usually served between eleven and twelve o'clock, consists of boiled rice together with a few vegetable curries; and butter-milk mixed with rice is the last course.

Their supper which usually consists of similar preparation is taken between seven and eight at night. The women take their food after the male members of the family. Only a minority of Nayars are strict vegetarians, though there is no prohibition against their eating meat, fish or fowl.

In large aristocratic families, Brahman cooks are engaged to prepare the meals, but the serving is in some cases done by the members. In other families, on the contrary, the cooks of

the caste or the grown-up women cook and serve the food to the inmates who sit in the dining hall with their own dishes or with plantain leaves placed before them. In ordinary and poor families the cooking and serving are done by women alone.

In grand festivities in which food is served to a large number of the caste-men, the preparations are similar to those served at Brahman feasts, a full account of which will be given when I deal with them.

The Nayars rank below the Ambalavásis and above the polluting castes. Even among themselves there are various grades of social precedence, and the members of higher sub-castes do not freely mingle with those of the lower. Men of the higher sub-castes may sometimes eat with those of the lower, but their women never take their meals with those lower to them in the social scale. It is curious to note that in grand feasts and on ceremonial occasions, good many formalities have to be observed in the allocation of seats in the dining hall for guests according to their social status, and any violation of the caste rules or etiquette will end in their abruptly leaving the hall. The touch of the Nayar pollutes the Brahmans, and they themselves in turn are polluted by the touch of the low caste Sudras. The consumption of meat does not entail loss of caste, though many abstain from eating it. They may take or drink water from the wells belonging either to their own caste or the three castes above them. Elayathús are their priests, but sometimes their caste-men also officiate as such, and Nambuthiris give *punnyáham* (holy water) to the Nayars under pollution. Being in close contact with the Brahmans, they learn to conduct themselves as the Brahmans do, and their morning and evening baths and their worship in temples are as punctual as those of the priestly class.

Clothing is of considerable hygienic importance in the life of a nation, and hygiene plays a considerable part in the dress of a Nayar. A piece of cloth, two to two-and-a-half yards long and one-and-a-half yards broad, is worn round the loins. It must touch the ground or very nearly so, and this method of wearing the cloth gives a simplicity and dignity most suitable to their classic features. A small upper garment is also worn while at home. A Nayar always carries an umbrella while walking in the sun, but there

is no covering for the head. This forms the costume of a large majority of them. On special occasions or when he goes to public places, he has the same loin cloth, while a richer cloth (*pávu mundu*), somewhat longer and broader, is worn over the upper part of the body. As has already been said, Nayars are to be found in all grades of public service, and these as well as others wear a kind of a neat loin cloth, with a shirt and coat together with a turban to cover the head, while others more fashionable appear in European costume with turbans instead of hats; others again wear hats as well, but their number is few. Among the poorer classes, the loin cloth is not larger than a yard-and-a-half or two by three-fourth of a yard.

The men shave their faces and bodies clean, leaving an oval patch of hair on the top of the head, while some grow it over a large surface of the head. In both cases, care is taken to keep the tufts sufficiently long, smooth and oily, and this adds considerably to their neat and handsome appearance; but it is becoming the fashion to crop the hair and to dress it in the fashion of the Europeans.

The Nayar women wear an inner garment round the loins and this is covered by an outer garment which is usually two-and-a-half yards in length and one-and-a-half yards in breadth. Sometimes, instead of two cloths, one cloth sufficiently long for the purpose is worn. The dress is white, and sufficiently decent to cover the lower part of the body, and a small upper cloth serves as a covering above the waist. The Nayar women of the present day wear petticoats and cover the upper part of their body with a piece of cloth. It is curious to notice that this form of dress does not find favour (in the rural parts) with the Nambuthiris who are either their landlords or to whom they owe some kind of allegiance or subordination. The absence of any covering for the bosom in ordinary female dress has drawn much ridicule on the Nayars, and this custom has been much misunderstood by foreigners. So far from indicating immodesty, it is looked upon by the people themselves in exactly the opposite light, for among them prostitutes only cover the breasts. "A custom has in it nothing indecent when it is universal," as one of the travellers philosophically remarks (Dall). It is, in fact, a mark of disrespect to one's own elders and betters for either a male or female of the Nayar caste, and of all castes

below it, to cover the upper part of the body, and traces of the same custom can still be found among other Dravidian tribes, some of them being people who are anything but uncivilized. The prohibition applies both to males and females. Men moreover cannot wear caps, turbans or shoes, and must divest themselves of these luxuries, when they meet their elders, even though the meeting takes place in the middle of the road. Until 1865, it was forbidden by law for women of the *Chóvans* and of those of the lower castes to wear any clothing above the loins. The present generation of Nayar women, except perhaps the servants and the poor, have taken to the use of an upper garment and petticoat, in the same way as the Nayar males now freely use a second cloth. Young girls wear a piece of cloth round the loins, while those of four and five years of age wear a small strip of cloth, or a piece of the bark of areca palm. Generally young children of both sexes go about naked.

The subject of hair-dressing and personal adornment is more psychological and ethnological than hygienic. The Nayar women take special care in the growth and preservation of their hair. They use a kind of medicinal oil to improve its growth, and to keep it smooth and shiny. Many a young woman's plait of hair reaches the knee or even lower, and this adds greatly to her beauty. The hair is parted in the middle and tied either tight to the ears or twisted up in front in a sort of cone or sometimes tied into a knot behind.

The Nayar women are fond of jewellery. They are no doubt partial to gold, but unlike their Brahman sisters they wear very few ornaments for

Jewellery.

daily use. The oldest ornament of the Nayar lady is the *nágá-patam* or serpent's hood, so called from the shape of the pendant. The ear-ornament is the *thóda*, which is a double convex disc, the front surface of which is either plain or set with rubies, for the wearing of which the ear-lobes are sufficiently dilated. This dilating process begins at a very early age, and the ear-lobes, in the case of a majority of the women, become so far distended as to make it possible to wear *thódas* of more than an inch in diameter. The tendency at present is to wear small ones which do not require much dilation. Then come the ornaments for the nose which are *múkkuthi* and *nathu*. These do not find favour with the young women of these days, and what is called the nose-screw set with a ruby has taken their place.



There are various ornaments for the neck, of which the one called *addiyal* is the commonest. Other ornaments for the neck are the so-called *yanthram*, *pootháli*, *avil málá* and *pulinakham*. The latter is worn by children, and *pálikka-móthiram* is the ornament which is worn by maidens. Gold and silver belts are worn round the loins. Grown-up women do not wear anklets, while the younger ones use *káppu* and *golusu*. Rings of all kinds are worn on the fingers.

## CHAPTER VI.

# THE SUDRAS OF COCHIN.

### B. THE LOW CASTE SUDRAS.

Next in social status to the high caste Nayers, come the low caste Sudras, who are also included in the time-honoured division of the Malayali Sudras. The term 'low caste Sudras' includes the three minor castes or sub-castes, namely, *Velakkathalavan*, *Veluthédan* and *Cháliyan*; the two similar castes, *Kadupattan* and *Tharakan*, are omitted in the list of the purely Malayali castes of the State. Again, in the last Imperial Census Report, the Velakkathalavan and Veluthédan alone are classed as low caste Sudras, while the other two are Tamil castes which are becoming Malayaliased. Instances of a similar process of assimilation which has been and is still going on among some of the Tamil castes in the Chittur Taluk of the State have come under my notice in the course of my investigations there. It is also curious to note that no place or status is assigned to the Kadupattans in any of the old Malayalam works dealing with castes, owing perhaps to the fact of their not having been brought to Kerala by Parasurama for some special occupation. They were classed among the low caste Sudras of Malabar, and only a corresponding status is given to them in the State. They are a large community striving to rise higher in the social scale, and I therefore propose to treat them as first among the low caste Sudras.

### THE KADUPATTANS.

They are a community peculiar to this coast and popularly supposed to be the descendants of degraded Pattar Brahmans. The origin of the caste is somewhat obscure, but the following story, as to their origin, is told by a few educated members of the caste.

The word 'Kadupattan' is another form of 'Kadur Bhattan' or Kadur Brahmans, *i. e.*, the Brahmans of the Kadur village in the Chola kingdom. The tradition is that they were the Brahmans of the said village who favoured the introduction of Buddhism, and were on that account banished from the country. They went to Kerala and sought the protection of the then Zamorin of Calicut, who allowed them to settle in his territory, from which they gradually spread themselves to the other Taluks of South Malabar, and to the northern Taluks of the Cochin State. They were not admitted into the Brahman society of Malabar, but were distinguished from other caste-men by the special name of Kadur Bhattans or Kadupattans. It is also said that, after their settlement in Kerala, they met the great religious reformer and philosopher, Sri Sankara Chariar, who, out of pity for them, directed them to teach the Sudras and other low caste-men, and blessed the members of some of their families with instructions on Sakti worship, whose descendants even now profess to be experts in its performance and claim it as an inheritance from their forefathers. The date of their arrival in Kerala is commemorated by the astrological formula, "*Kaduka thyaktha sthēya*," which means that their settlement in the new country was after 16,70,342 days from the commencement of *Kaliyuga*, *i. e.*, in the year 625 of the Malayalam era. Thus, they have been in the land of their adoption for the last 450 years.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Gundert considers the word to be a compound of 'Kadu' and 'Pattan', a Pattar Brāhman degraded on account of eating fish. In the Sirkar accounts they are called 'Choulam', *i. e.*, those who belonged to Chola country. *Pattanam Pizhathavar*, or those who have lost their status, is another name by which they are known to other caste-men.

Ezhuthachan (teacher) is a title originally given to the educated members of their caste by the senior lady of the Zamorin's family and other chieftains who authorised them to teach the low caste people. This points to their having been largely employed as village school-masters for a time. Even now this title is conferred on them

Their chief titles.

1. The account appears to have been cooked up to prove their Brahmanical pretensions. If they had come to Kerala some 450 years ago, they could not have met Sri Sankara Chariar who lived more than 1,000 years ago. There is also another account that, about 2,000 years ago, they were expelled from the Chola country before the said religious reformer was born.

by the rulers and chieftains on payment of some *thirmulkazhcha* (nuzzer). Panikkar is another title possessed by some. The caste-men below them address the male members as Pattarappan, and their women as Pattathiar or Pattathiar Amma.

There are two main sub-divisions in this caste: (1) Kara-  
Sub-divisions of the caste. purathukár (those inhabiting the sea-coast), and  
 (2) Muppathirandukár (members of the thirty-two families occupying the interior). There is no inter-marriage between the members of the two sub-divisions, but no objection is taken to members of one party taking meals along with others in the same house. There is also another minor division called Ponathies, the members of which are the descendants of the people who were originally out-casted for some violation of caste rules.

The Kadupattans are found in all parts of the northern  
Habitations. Taluks of the State. The houses of the wealthy are similar to those of the Nayers; but the caste-men are generally poor, and therefore live in small thatched houses, made of mud walls and bamboo framework with a room or two, a kitchen at one end and a verandah in front. They were, in former times, forbidden to build substantial houses, to have gates, or use gold ornaments, but all such restrictions have now disappeared.

Among relations, a young man may marry the daughter of  
Marriage prohibitions. his maternal uncle or paternal aunt. All other matrimonial alliances among relatives are strictly prohibited.

Among the Kadupattans, the girls are generally married  
Marriage customs. both before and after puberty; but in cases where suitable husbands are not procurable, what is called *Veettu kettu* is performed before maturity. It is only a *tali*-tying by the mother. In no case is a girl allowed to remain without a *táli* or marriage badge until she becomes of age. Should such a case occur, the fact that the girl has attained puberty is concealed; but such instances are very rare.

When a girl attains puberty, she is put into a separate  
Puberty customs. room during the three days of pollution, when she is fed with very nourishing meals, and directed to lie in a blanket during the night. The fourth day is one of festivity to friends and relations. The husband has to provide her with two pieces of cloth. The relatives who

attend the feast bring fruits, bread and sweetmeats. On the morning of the fourth day, the girl is led out in procession to the tank for a bath, when her *enangan* prepares a *bali* or sacrifice (pieces of the green bark of a plantain tree arranged in a triangular form with small torches stuck into it). As the girl wearing the *mattu* (half washed cloth supplied by the washer-woman) sinks under water to be freed from pollution, the *enangan* passes the *bali* above water, believing that any demon, she may be possessed of, will then leave her. After her bath, she is neatly dressed and bedecked with ornaments. She then returns home in procession, after which her girl friends and the caste women who accompanied her are served with a kind of bread (*theratividu*). This is followed by a feast to the guests who have been invited.

In general, the marriageable age for girls is between ten and twelve, and that for boys between sixteen and twenty-one. But this is often exceeded. After the examination of the horoscopes of the young man and the girl whom it is proposed he should marry, the parents of the latter are consulted in the event of an agreement between the horoscopes. If they approve of the match, a special day is selected, when certain formalities leading to the negotiation and settlement for the wedding are gone through. This is called *Parannun* or *Achāra Kalyānam*. On the day selected, the bridegroom's party, with the *enangan*, goes to the bride's house where the caste-men of the village, together with her *enangan*, are assembled. A *pūja* to Ganapati is then performed, after which the bride's father makes a solemn promise in the presence of the assembled guests to give his daughter in marriage to the said young man. Then the parties assembled are treated to a feast, and a present of a pair of cloths is also made to the bride. Among the members of the thirty-two families, the worship of Ganapati as well as the present to the bride is dispensed with. A formal declaration is made when the parties are assembled for dinner; and invitations are sent out by both parties to their friends and relations to attend the wedding on a fixed day.

On the morning of the day fixed for the celebration of the wedding, the bridegroom, neatly dressed, and well bedecked after a bath, sets out with his own party and the *enangan* for a house near that of the bride's. Here they are received with

Marriage customs  
(continued).

due ceremony by the bride's party, and after the partaking of food (*Ayal Oonnu*) together, they proceed to the house of the bride, where, at the gate, a woman welcomes the bridegroom with a lighted lamp and a vessel full of *guruthi* (water mixed with chunam and turmeric powder). The latter is waved round his face to remove the potency of the evil-eye and then thrown on the ground at his right hand. As the party enters the house, loud acclamations of "ha, ha," are made by the persons assembled. As the auspicious hour approaches, the bride's *enangan* performs the Ganapati *pūja* and officiates as the priest. The bride and the bridegroom offer *dakshina* (gifts) to the Brahmans present. The bridegroom sits on a plank facing the east, while the bride with a garland in her hand goes thrice round him, and putting the garland round his neck, sits on his left. Then the left hand of the bridegroom and the right hand of the bride are joined together by the *enangan* amidst the loud acclamations of the by-standers.<sup>1</sup> Offerings of *dakshina*, etc., to the Brahmans are then made by the bride and the bridegroom.

Among the thirty families, *Pānigrahanam* is in vogue, but the garlanding performed by the other sect at the auspicious hour is dispensed with. As the bridegroom enters the gate of the bride's house, an attempt is made to throw the garland round his neck, which is, however, evaded. Before *Pānigrahanam*, eleven fanams (or Rs. 3-2-0) is paid by the bridegroom's *enangan* as the price of the bride. After *Pānigrahanam*, which is the essential portion of the ceremony, the relatives on both sides, one by one, take a handful of rice and, touching the loins and shoulders of the bridal pair, throw it on their heads as a blessing and also pay a few annas or even a rupee as their means allow of it to defray the expenses of the feast. After this, the conjugal pair are conducted to a room specially decorated; but the bridegroom is not allowed to remain there long. Then follows the feast at which the guests assembled are sumptuously fed. On the second day the bride's party go to the bridegroom's house along with him, where the same formalities are gone through, and others assembled there are treated to feasts for two days. Just at the moment of their starting, the bride's father and her

1. The reformed party among them insist upon the tali-tying by the bridegroom at the time.

*enangan* go thrice round the decorated pandal, and the former makes a solemn announcement, in the presence of those assembled in the court-yard, that his daughter has been given in marriage to the said young man, and that he gives as a dowry one hundred fanams (or Rs. 28-9-0) worth of gold ornaments, one hundred palams weight of vessels, a milch cow and calf, and that he expects kind and loving treatment and support for his daughter from his son-in-law. The married couple return to the bride's house on the fourth day, where they stay a week or two, during which their nuptials take place without any ceremony.<sup>1</sup>

Immediately after, the bridegroom returns home along with the bride, and thereafter they live as husband and wife. Neither polygamy nor polyandry prevails among them: but widows re-marry. A woman, after the death of her husband, lives in his house under pollution for twelve days. If she is young and inclined to re-marry, she severs her connection with the family of her husband in the presence of her caste people and returns to her home. By her subsequent marriage, she forfeits all claims to maintenance by the husband's family. Should she have had children by the deceased husband, they are maintained out of his family funds, and generally looked after by the members of that family; but the relation between the mother and the children, though living separately, lasts for ever. The right of a widow for maintenance from the family funds of her deceased husband, after her formal separation, is a question that has yet to be decided in a court of law. Now, as a general rule, the woman is supported by her father or brother. Grown-up women and others unwilling to marry after their husbands' death prefer to pass the rest of their life in their families. Among the Kadupattans, divorce is easy enough, and it may arise on any of the causes set forth in my account of the high caste Nayars.

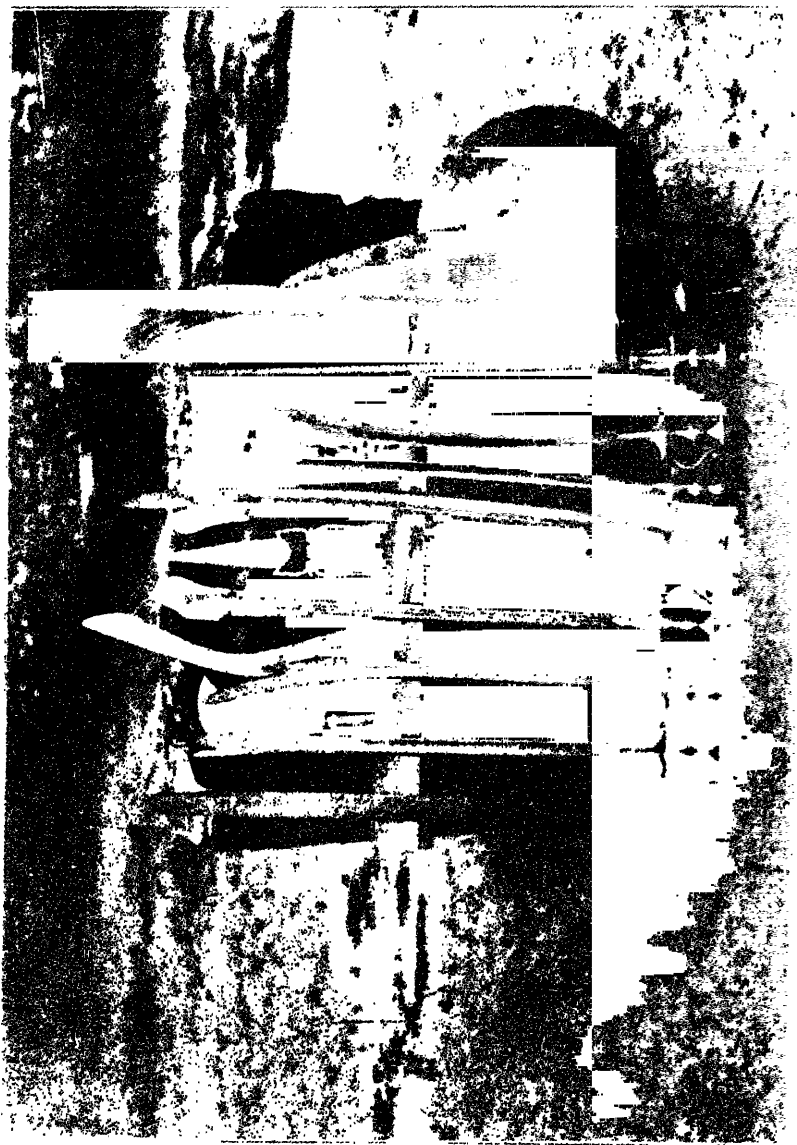
In some cases, even ill-feeling between the parents of the two parties may cause a separation between a loving married couple. The chance of getting a more handsome wife or the chance of the woman securing a better husband may also serve

1. Those who cannot afford to give any dowry to their daughters give her a *kinnam* (a bell-metal dish for taking food) and a *kindi* (a bell-metal vessel for drinking water). The ornaments are: *Thoda* (ear ornament), *Nookkuthi* (nose ornament), *Poottu mani* or *Chittu mani*, a kind of necklace, and anklets of silver.



*King of Kochin riding on an elephant, attended by his Nayar*

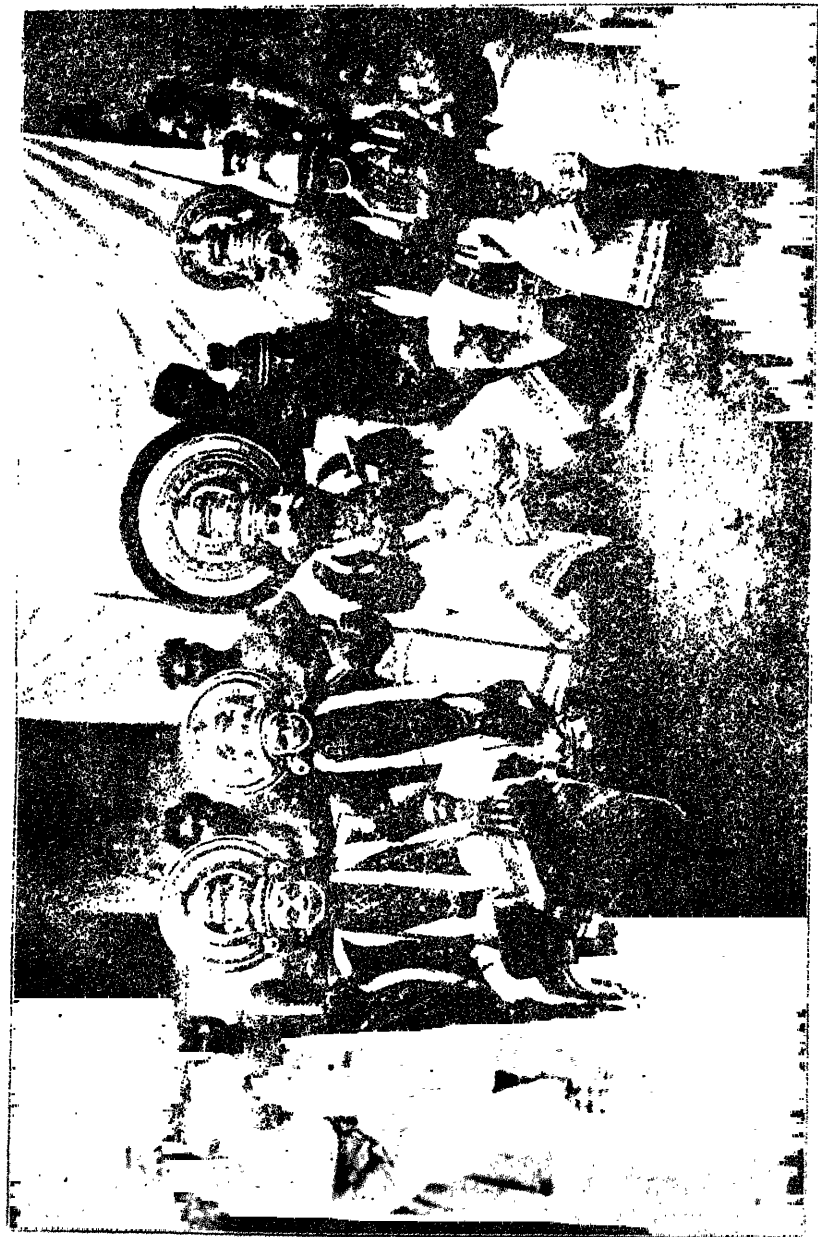




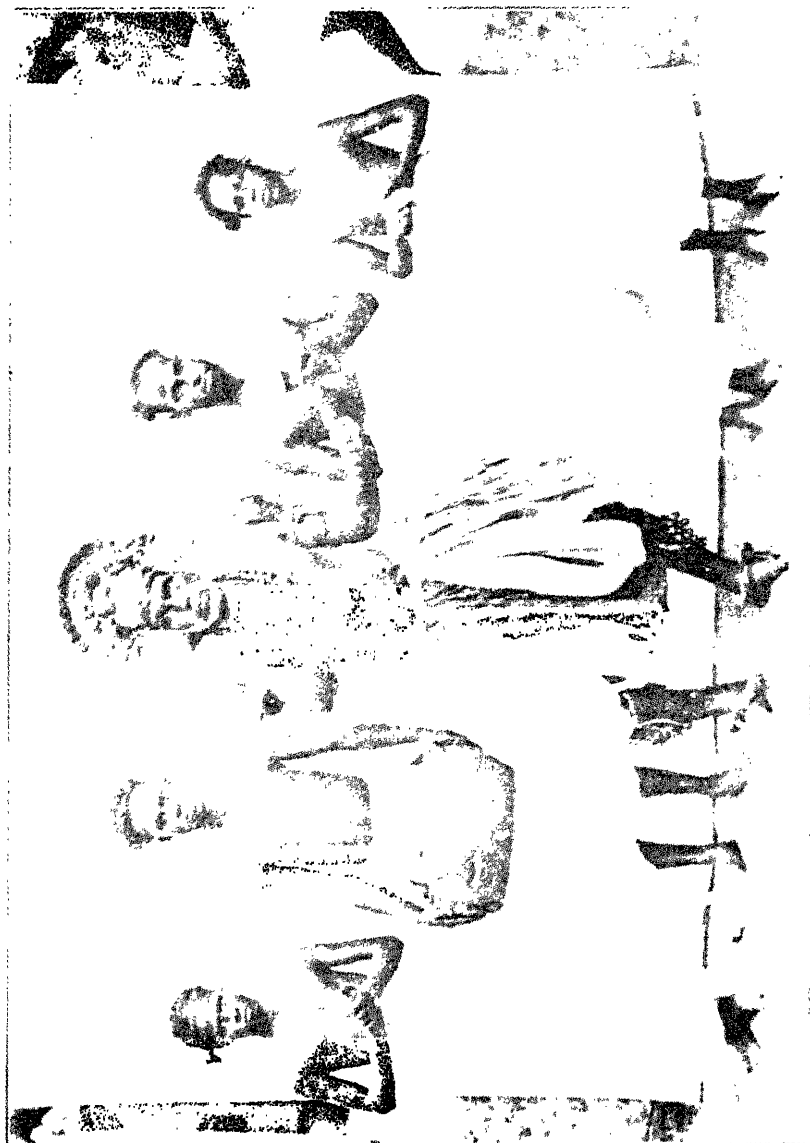
THE WEAPONS OF THE OLD NAYAR WARRIORS.



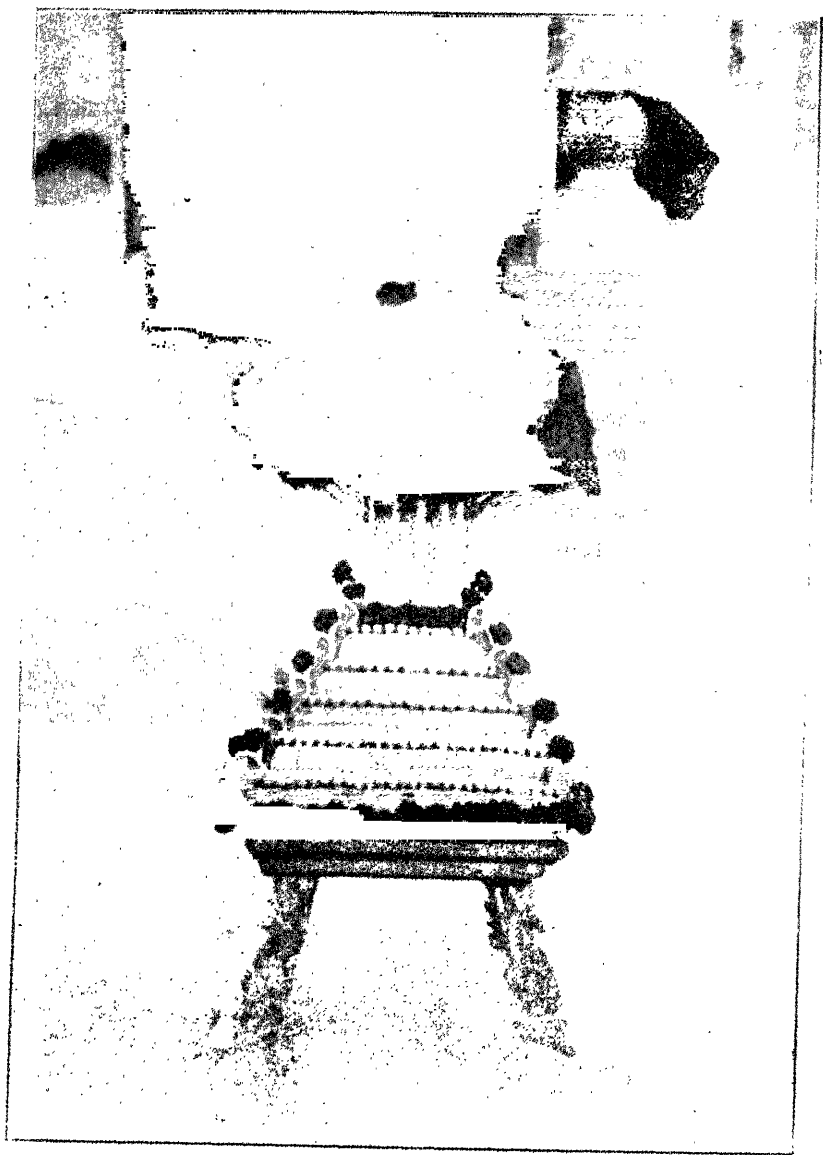
A TYPICAL NAYAR FAMILY.



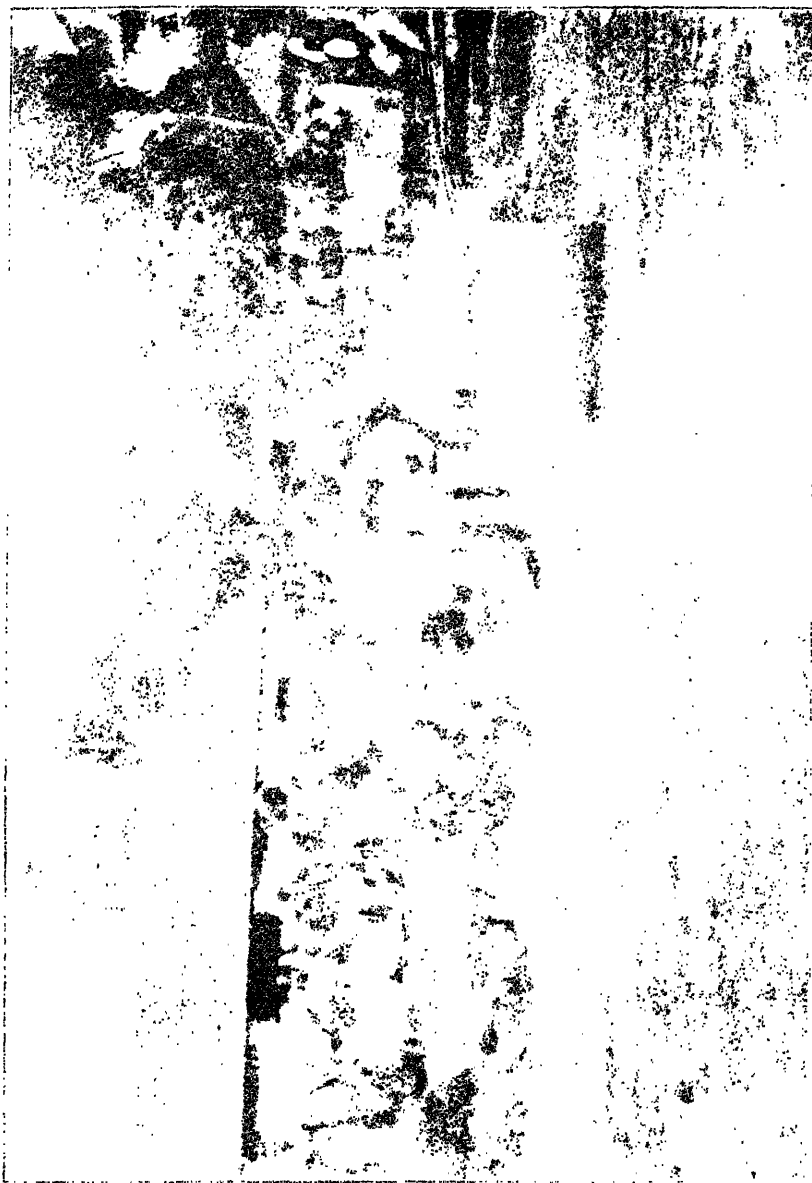
CHARACTERS OF MALABAR DRAMA (KATHA KALI).



OTTAMTHULLAL.



MAHADEVAR.



NAYAR WOMEN THRESHING CORN.



TWO NAVAR GIRLS WITH ORNAMENTS.

as a cause for divorce. If the husband wishes to divorce his wife, he together with a few of his caste-men and the *enangan* goes to her paternal house and informs her parents of his intention. A list of the expenditure since the time of the marriage incurred by both sides is made, and the party who had incurred the greater expense being indemnified, the divorce is complete. As a general rule, the husband relinquishes the eleven fanams paid for the bride.

Should a woman before marriage become pregnant, and the fact become publicly known, the custom was that her paramour was compelled to marry her, but many now are of opinion that she should be outcasted.

Customs connected with pregnancy, child-birth and other post-natal ceremonies are the same as those prevailing among the Nayers.

Among the Kadupattans, inheritance is in the male line ; but there is a sub-caste (Ponathies) somewhat lower in status to the main community, among whom both forms of inheritance are in vogue. The daughters may succeed to the property of their father in the absence of a son, but it can take place only after the death of their mother. Compulsory partition is also allowed.

In every desam or village, there are some leading families, the senior members or *kīranavans* of which form the head-men of the caste. Among the thirty-two families, the members are divided for the purpose of local jurisdiction in social matters, into four sub-divisions called *muppathirandoos* (thirty-twos) generally held at Manjapara, Kōttai Pallanchathanur and Kootallur. There are several villages under the assembly in each of these divisions. There are three assemblies, one higher than the other, namely, (1) village councils, (2) *muppathirandoos* (consisting of the representatives of the various villages), and (3) four *muppathirandoos* (representatives of the whole community). They deal with all matters affecting the welfare of the whole community ; but formerly, all offences, both of a civil and criminal nature, were brought for their arbitration and decision. The offences now brought to the notice are cases of adultery, a Kadupattan taking meals in any of the houses of the prohibited caste-men, performing marriage or other ceremonies when under pollution, marriage within the prohibited degrees of



relationship and violations of caste rules. When any such offence is committed by a member of the caste and it is brought to the notice of the head-man of the village, he convenes a meeting of the elders of that village. They summon the offender before them and enquire into the matter. If the offence is proved, and the offender confesses, he is punished with a small fine. If he does not confess and the offence is proved, he is outcasted, and the matter is reported to the assemblies of the other divisions. In such a case, he is forbidden from any intercourse with his caste-men, he has no *enangan* (the member of the caste without whose help he cannot perform any ceremony), he cannot get his son or daughter married, and the village barber and washerman will no longer render their services to him. The culprit thus is ostracised from the rest of the community. If the offender then changes his mind so as to submit to the decision of his caste-men, he applies to the caste-men of the village to convene a meeting for the trial, and deposits the necessary amount of money to defray the expenses thereof. The leading members of his village as well as those of the neighbouring ones are invited, and when they assemble, he makes a formal request to them to take up his case. They fully enquire into the matter and pronounce their judgment. He is either fined or outcasted. In the former case, he deposits the necessary fine on a plank in front of them, which is equally divided among them or set apart for some charitable purpose; in the latter case, he severs his connection with his caste-men in all social functions. He becomes a member of the Ponathi sub-division.

The Kadupattans belong to the caste of Sudras, and their worship is the same as that of the Nayars (vide Religion of the Nayars). Very seldom do Brahmans act as priests for them. Among the members of the thirty-two families, the priest is called the *Kurukkal*, who gives *upadésam* (advice) as to the method of worshipping the deities and for purification of the body known as *kalasam*. For ceremonial purposes, the services of the *enangan* are indispensable.

When a Kadupattan dies, the caste-men of the village are informed, and they assemble in the house of the dead, while one of them acts as *enangan*, and brings a pot of water to wash the dead body. The male

members of the family bathe themselves and carry the corpse out into the court-yard where it is laid on a plantain leaf and covered. At the time of removal, the wife removes the *tāli* (marriage badge) which signifies that conjugal life is at an end. The dead body is then washed and dressed, and all the women related to him walk round the dead body as a mark of respect, and, in passing, each throws on it a piece of cloth, and these are the perquisites of the barber who discharges some priestly functions during the funeral days. The body is then removed to the south-eastern part of the compound and placed upon the funeral pile, when the eldest son applies fire to the pile and all those assembled wait until the body is burned and reduced to ashes. The assembly then disperses, but each individual must bathe before returning home. The members of the family of the deceased return home after their bath and are served with meals from a neighbouring house, for there can be no cooking in the house of the dead. From the next day to the seventh, the usual *pinda bali* (rice-ball offering) is offered up to the spirit of the departed; and on the morning of the seventh day is performed the *sanchayanam* or the ceremony of collecting the bones. The junior members of the family as well as the chief mourner are shaved, and purifying themselves by a bath and wearing a *mattu* (a washed cloth brought by the washerman), they go to the spot where the body was burnt. They collect the bones, some of which are kept apart to be deposited in Benares, Gaya, Rameswaram, or Péroor, while the others are placed in a pot of unbaked clay, which is then carried home by the son who is usually the chief mourner and is placed on a mortar in front of the house. The inmates of the house make an obeisance before it and touch the burial urn as a mark of respect. After this, it is buried by the side of a river or a tank. When the pot is removed for burial, each woman of the family except the eldest gives the barber and the washerman a few measures of paddy, while the eldest gives the same quantity of rice to each of them. There is also a feast for those assembled in the house. Pollution is observed for ten days, and on the evening of the tenth, offerings are made to the spirit of the departed which are thrown into a tank or river. The members of the family close their pollution by bath with *mattu*, when water is sprinkled on their bodies as they dip into the water. *Chithayan* cleans the house and compound. Among

the Karapurattukár, there is a separate family, the members of which discharge the functions assigned to them, and they are, on this account, held in a low estimation. But among the other sect, it is the barber who performs this work. The members are free from pollution on the eleventh day, and on the twelfth, a ceremony corresponding to *srádha* is performed. In well-to-do families, the eldest son who is the chief mourner bathes early in the morning and offers the sacrificial offerings to the spirit of the departed either for forty-one days or for a whole year, at the end of which, he performs the first anniversary ceremony, for which a member of the caste is invited, sumptuously fed, and dismissed with a gift of a few annas, a fan, a stick and an umbrella.

The dead bodies of middle-aged as well as of old persons are burned, while those who have died of small-pox, cholera or any other infectious disease as also those of children, are buried. In the latter case, the seventh day ceremony is dispensed with. There is no common cremation ground, but they use the south-eastern corner of their own compounds. The pollution is, in all the cases, only for ten days, and all the subsequent anniversaries are performed on the day of the same asterism. The son or the chief mourner fasts for the night previous, and the *enangan* is invited on the morning of the anniversary day. He bathes early, prepares the rice-balls, and sitting on a plank, his feet are washed. Some *púja* is also performed, and offerings are made in the belief that he represents the spirit of the deceased. He is then treated to a feast, after which the performer eats the remains of the food. He is also furnished with rice-cakes (*ada*) for his supper that day. On the new moon nights in Karkadakam, Thulam and Makaram, a similar *púja* is performed.

For those who die in pregnancy or child-birth, they have the same sort of ceremonies, in addition to which a 'porter's rest' with an inscription to commemorate the name of the dead is placed on the road-side underneath a shady tree as a mark of charity.

The primary occupation of the caste-men is teaching, and there are many village school masters of this kind in rural parts. There are also others who are astrologers, physicians, magicians, etc. In former times, when salt was manufactured in the State, they were

Occupation.

largely engaged in the selling of that commodity; but, at present, they are agriculturists, either landlords, substantial farmers or agricultural labourers, and they form about 2·3 per cent. of the Hindu population and 1·6 per cent. of the total population of the State. The poor among them work as ordinary day labourers earning four or five annas a day, and some even act as domestic servants.

As has been already said, they belong to the class of low caste Sudras. They pollute the high caste  
 Social status. Nayers by touch, and are allowed to enter only the outer enclosure of temples as far as the *bali kallu* (sacrificial stone). However, to-day they are agitating for, and bringing forward, their claims to be treated as high caste Nayers. They eat the food of the Brahmans, Ambalavásis and Nayers, but abstain from taking food from the rest of the low caste Sudras, and are also polluted by the touch of other low caste Sudras. In respect of the tuft of hair, dress, ornament, language and matters of lesser importance, they closely resemble the Nayers, but there are traces to show that they were a *paradési* (foreign) caste.

Conscious of the low estimation in which they are held by the high caste-men, the Kadupattans have,  
 Adhyapaka Samajam. of late years, organised an association called *Adhyápa Samájam* to introduce certain reforms, social and religious, for the advancement of their community. Several meetings have been held during the last three years, both in the State and in the adjacent British territories. The following are some of the reforms carried out by them:—

(1) *Marriage customs*:—The ceremony of the formal settlement (*Achára kalyánam* or betrothal) made before the wedding is to be abolished, and in its place is to be substituted formal promise of the bride's father to the father of the bridegroom. The *táli*-tying, which is generally performed by the mother and is meaningless, must be done away with, and the *táli* which is the marriage badge must be tied by the husband at the time of the marriage as in the case of Brahmans. The bridegroom's dress on the wedding day should be simple and neat. Polygamy can be allowed with the consent of the *Samájam* only under dire necessity. Widow marriage is allowed, and the formalities connected with it are the same as those of first marriage. Divorce, however, is greatly discouraged.

(2) *Funeral customs*:—The observance of the *Deeksha* may be for twelve or forty-one days or even a year, according to the wish and convenience of the chief mourner. The caste priest should have a proper training for the performance of all ceremonies, and the services of the *Cheetiyan* on the eleventh day for purification from pollution should be dispensed with, and replaced by those of Brahmans. Pollution from death is for ten days, and the purification on the eleventh day should be by taking *punnyáham* (holy water) after sacrificial offerings have been made to the departed spirit, and after bathing in a tank or river. Then should follow the *Atházham* on the night of the eleventh day, and the feast to the caste-men on the twelfth day.

(3) The caste-men and women are prohibited from taking the food of any other caste-men except that of the Brahmans.

(4) The education of women, so as to fit them for proper house-management, the nursing and up-bringing of children, is receiving the earnest attention of the caste-men.

(5) The title of *Ezhuthachan* should be obtained chiefly by merit and not by the payment of money (*thirumulkázhcha*) to some chieftain or Nambuthiri landlord.

(6) Those of the caste-men who have been in jail for any crime, when set free after their period of confinement, may be re-admitted into the caste only after due *práyaschitham*.

(7) The necessity of inter-dining and inter-marriage between the members of the two main sub-divisions is urged on the principle that union is strength.

(8) Branch associations are being organised in every locality where there is a large number of Kadupattans.

The holy-thread (*pinúl*) should be worn by the priest and the bridegroom, and all ceremonies previous to this should be celebrated before tali-tying.

The Kadupattans in the State, during the last Census, numbered 13,063; of these, 6,477 were males, and 6,586 females. They are a backward community, but are doing their best for their social elevation.

Conclusion

#### THE VELAKKATHALAVANS.

They are the professional village barbers, and shave Nayers and all castes above them. Their customs with regard to marriages, inheritance, and religion, are similar to those of

the Nayars; their birth and death pollutions last for ten days. The Nambuthiris give them *punnyāham* or holy water for purification. The *enangan* ties the *tīli* for a girl, and he or somebody else may unite himself in *sambandham* to her either before or after she comes of age, but the tali-tying ceremony must be performed before she reaches puberty, or she will lose her caste. In the last Census they numbered 2,761; of these, 1,309 were males, and 1,452 females. A few families of these people are to be found in every village, and their services are employed for all ceremonious and other occasions. They are allowed to enter the outer enclosure of temples as far as the *bali kallu* (sacrificial stone). They too, like the Kadupattans, are a backward community, but unlike them are at present making no efforts to rise in the social scale.

#### THE VELUTHEDANS.

They are the village washermen whose degradation, like that of the Velakkathalavans, is chiefly due to the occupation they follow. Though their touch pollutes the castes above them, the Nambuthiris wear clothes washed by them without being in any way polluted, and the clothes washed by them are used even for dressing the idols in the temples. It has been so ordained by the great Sri Sankarāchariar. In matters, religious and social, they follow customs precisely similar to those of the Nayars. A sub-caste 'Pothuven' among them performs purificatory ceremonies, <sup>1</sup> while, for other purposes, the *enangan* is their priest. In the last Census they numbered 3,152; of these, 1,536 were males, and 1,616 females

#### THE CHALIYANS.

They are a caste of weavers found in Irinjalakuda, Cranganore, Aripalam, and other places in the Cochin State. Though they are said to have been a Tamil caste in former times, they are now completely Malayaliased. They appear to be immigrants from the Tamil districts, and keep the original habit of living in streets.

The Cháliyans are a class of weavers found chiefly in the district of Tanjore, and their original home appears to have been the Andhara country, from whence a section of these people were invited by the

1. They are also the caste barbers, and are looked upon as somewhat lower than the rest of the caste. In matters of tali-tying, the caste is endogamous

Chola king, Raja Raja I, after the union of the eastern Chalukya and the Chola dynasties. The early Chaliyans, who immigrated into Malabar and Cochin in ancient times, may very likely have been a section of the Chaliyans above referred to.

With regard to their immigration into Cochin, the following tradition is told by a member of the caste. In order to procure cotton thread spun by some Chaliyan maidens which he required for the *Kalasam* or purificatory ceremony in the Tiruvanchikulam temple, the great Cheraman Perumal had a few families of Chaliyans brought from Kanjee-puram, and allowed them to reside in Cranganore. He also rewarded them with lands, tax free, for the services rendered to him. A similar story is also told about their coming to Malabar. It is said, that one of the Zamorins, who wished to introduce the worship of Ganapati to which the Chaliyans were much devoted, entrusted his minister, Manghát Acchan, with the entertainment of the new arrivals. These people were supposed to belong to a high caste, and the Zamorin's minister, who was nettled with their fastidiousness and constant complaints, managed to degrade them in a body by the trick of secretly mixing fish with their food.<sup>1</sup> They do not, like their brethren (Sálians) of the east coast, wear *púníl*, but their caste priests, while performing certain *pújas*, wear it over their right shoulder instead of over the left like the Brahmans.

The Chaliyans are divided into two sects or factions, *viz.*, the right hand sect, and the left hand sect. The former are said to be superior to the latter in social status, and consider themselves polluted when touched by the members of the left hand section. There is neither inter-marriage nor inter-dining between the members of the two sections. They must have settled in Malabar some time after the occurrence of the dispute which gave rise to the two parties, about the eleventh century.

The Chaliyans owe a kind of allegiance to the Chief of Cranganore and furnish cloths of their own weaving for the funeral ceremonies of the members of his family. They also supply them with cotton thread for their *púníl*.

The customs connected with the matrimonial alliance of

the Chaliyans are like those of the Nayars.

The girls of the Chaliyans have two forms of

<sup>1</sup> Malabar Gazetteer page 122.

marriage. The tali-tying ceremony for girls is performed before they come of age. There should be a separate tali-tier for every girl, and he should be one of her *enangu*. It is a ceremony which lasts for four days, and the formalities connected with it are the same as those among the Nayars; but, on the morning of the fourth day, the married couple bathe, and worship the deity in the local temple, after which they return home, when the bride serves food to the tali-tier. This signifies that she, as wife, has begun to discharge her duties of cooking and serving the food to the husband; but the marital relations are only ephemeral; for, after his meals he is dismissed with presents. If the tali-tier wishes to marry her, he may do so, if the girl's parents have no objection. He has, in that case, to supply her with cloths. For the adult marriage or *sambandham*, the customs slightly vary. On the auspicious day fixed for the ceremony, the parents of the bridegroom, his uncle and relatives, go to the bride's house where they are properly welcomed. At the auspicious hour, the girl is presented with the wedding dress which they have brought, and the party assembled are sumptuously entertained, after which they depart from the bride's house. On a similar auspicious day, the bridegroom and his *enangan* visit the bride and stay there for a few days, during which nuptials are celebrated. After this he returns home with his wife, who either stays there with her husband or returns to her house after a week or two. Here she is visited by her husband as often as he likes, going in the evening and returning in the next morning. There is neither polygamy nor polyandry prevailing among them, but widows may marry. The customs connected with pregnancy, child-birth and the post-natal ceremonies for children are the same as those in vogue among the Nayars.

Among the Chaliyans, inheritance is in the male line.

**Inheritance.** They have their caste assemblies, and the elderly members composing them meet whenever necessary to deliberate upon caste disputes, and their decisions are final.

**Religion.** They adore Ganapati who is their tutelary deity. Bhagavati is also specially worshipped by the caste-men. In Travancore and British Malabar, they have temples of their own, in which the caste-men themselves officiate as priests. In the Cochin State, they have no temples;



for they are very poor. They are also much addicted to devil dancing, and the ceremonies in connection with it are performed by some of their members, who act as *Velichapáds*. Vettakkorumakan and Gulikan are their minor gods.

The dead bodies are generally burned, and the funeral ceremonies are performed by the sons and nephews, either separately or conjointly. The pollution is for fifteen days, and on the morning of the sixteenth, the purificatory ceremonies are all performed by the Cheethiyan, who is a member of the somewhat degraded section of the caste. The caste-men are treated to a feast on the night, both on the fifteenth and the sixteenth day. Other customs are the same as those among the Nayars.

The primary occupation of the Chaliyans is weaving. There are also a few traders and cultivators among them. Their is no organised industry on a large scale. The clothes they weave are small coarse ones for the use of the poor people.

The following account of the Chaliyans is taken from the 'Travels of Duarte Barbosa':—

"There is another set of gentiles still lower, whom they call Chaliyans, who are weavers, and have no other business except to weave cloths of cotton, and some of silk, which are of little value, and are used by the common people. And these also have a sect and form of idolatry apart. Their lineage does not mix with any others; only the Nayars may have mistresses amongst the women of their people so that they do not enter their houses without bathing and changing their clothes whenever they have visited them. Many of these are sons of Nayars, and so they are very fine men in their figures, and they bear arms like the Nayars and go to wars and fight very well. In marriages they have the law of the Nayars, and their sons do not inherit. Their wives have the power of doing what they please with themselves, with the Nayars, or with other weavers, and they cannot mix with any other lineage under pain of death."

### THE TARAKANS.

The Tarakans were originally a Tamil caste of people who have, within living memory, developed into Nayars in whose midst they at present live, still retaining some of the old customs. They are found chiefly in the Chittur Taluk of the State, and in the adjacent British parts of the Palghat Taluk. They are closely allied to the Múttans of Palghat and Walluvanad Taluks, but they would consider it a disgrace to acknowledge any affinity with them. The word 'Tarakan' literally means a 'broker'. Dr. Gundert says, that they were originally warehouse-keepers at Palghat. It is said that a

Múttan may, in course of time, become a Tarakan and then a Nayar.

The following account is given by Dr. Buchanan regarding the origin of the caste:—"They are chiefly of the kind called Taragamar, who are a sort of brokers, or rather warehouse-keepers. They have store-houses, in which merchants coming from the east or west deposit their goods until they can dispose of them to those coming from the opposite quarter. The principals in general remain to make in person their sales and purchases; but some of them, that are rich, employ the Taragamar of this place to sell their goods. The merchants that frequent this mart are those of Colicodu (Calicut), Tiruvana-Angadi, Paniani-Vacul (Ponnany), Parupanad, Tanur (Tannore), Manapuran, Valatire, Manjeri, Puten-Angadi, Shavacadu (Chowghat), and Cochi (Cochin) on the west; and Coimbatore, Dindigul, Darapuram, Salem, Sati-Mangala, Palani (Pulni), Wadumalay-Cottai, Trichinapoly, Tanjore, Madura, Tinnevely, Madras, and Seringapatam from the east."

"The broker is not answerable for fire or theft; nor is he even bound to pay any loss that may happen from the badness of his store-houses. The commission is  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a fanam (14 pies) on every Tolam of weighable goods, whether they be stored seven days or one year which is at the rate of  $7\frac{1}{4}$  d. a cwt. Cloth merchants always sell their own goods. On each load, they pay as warehouse rent half a fanam. The brokers say, that during the reign of Tippu they had a more extensive trade than at present. Even after Malabar fell into the hands of the English the trade with Coimbatore was not interrupted. These assertions appear to me highly improbable; but I am not able to ascertain the truth; for the reports of the custom-house, which Mr. Warden was so good as to send me through the commissioners, have not reached my hands."

There is no sub-division in the caste. A Tarakan girl is married either before or after she comes of age. The bridegroom who is a member of the caste is not the tali-tier, though he is the husband of the girl. On an auspicious day chosen for the wedding ceremony, he goes with his party to the bride's house, neatly dressed in a *soman* and *vaishiti* like a Tamil Sudra bridegroom, with a knife stuck in the girdle, a silver thread over his left shoulder, a turban over his head, and

there they are properly welcomed. The auspicious hour for tali-tying is announced by the village astrologer, when an elderly member of the caste goes inside the house and ties the *táli* round the neck of the girl, who is dressed and adorned in her best, and seated in a conspicuous part of the house. The bride's uncle takes her to the pandal in front of the house, and seats her by the side of the bridegroom close to a pole (*Brimhankal*), when at the auspicious hour announced by the astrologer the left hand of the bride and the bridegroom are placed one over the other by the officiating caste priest or his wife. The close contact of the left hands (*Pánigrahanam*) is the binding portion of the ceremony. The marriage is formally over, though the festivities last for four days. On the morning of the fifth day the married couple bathe, and neatly dressed, adore the local deity. Then after a feast, as during the previous four days, the bridegroom and his party return home with the bride, and live thereafter as husband and wife. The consummation takes place on the night of either the first or the third day. Neither polygamy nor polyandry prevails among them. Their widows never marry. The inheritance is through the male line.

They have their caste assemblies, which consist of the elderly members who meet on all important occasions concerning the well-being of the caste; and their functions are precisely similar to those described in the account of the allied castes.

In religion they are like other low caste Sudras. They adore Bhagavati or Káli in particular. The dead bodies of the Tarakans are either burned or buried. The son is the chief mourner who performs the funeral ceremonies. The pollution lasts for ten days and on the morning of the eleventh day, after the usual rice-ball offerings, all the agnates wearing the *máttu* (cloth brought by the washerman) bathe and become free from pollution. The priest, *Chovattom*, who is a member of their own caste, assists at their funeral ceremonies and purifies them at the end of pollution. His functions are like those of the Attikurussi Nayars. He is also the priest in the Bhagavati temples. The Tarakans are either cultivators or traders and many do cooly work. As regards their social status, they are classed among the low caste Sudras, though they are unwilling to be treated as such. They eat the food of the Kiriyaatil

Nayars, but abstain from taking the meals prepared by the members of the other sub-divisions among the Nayars. They numbered 783 at the last Census, 368 being males and 415 females.

The members of the five castes which form the low caste Sudras are comparatively poorer than those of the other sub-divisions among the Nayars, and live mainly by their traditional occupations. Velakkathalavans and Veluthédans are degraded on account of their work, while the Kadupattans, Cháliyans, and Tarakans, who are not entitled to similar treatment, are treated as low caste Sudras, because their status has not been defined in old works dealing with Malayali castes which have long been in existence. They all belong to a backward community.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE AMBALAVASIS.

THE term 'Ambalavasi' is a generic caste name, which includes the various divisions or sub-castes whose occupation is temple service in some form or other. In the *Keralamahātmiyam* they are known as *Kshétravasins*; <sup>1</sup> and they rank below the Brahmans and Kshatriyas, but are above the Sudras. Most of the sub-castes have grown out of the sexual relations between the members of the higher and lower classes, and are on that account called *Pratilómajás* <sup>2</sup> and *Anulómajás*. <sup>3</sup> They may broadly be divided into two communities, viz., those who wear the *púnul* or sacred thread, and those who do not. To the former belong the *Múttatu*, *Adikal*, *Chákkiyar*, *Pushpaka Nambiyar* and *Thiyyáti Nambiyar*, and to the latter, *Chákkiyar Nambiyar*, *Váriyar*, *Pishároti*, *Puthuvál*, and *Márar*. The customs and manners of each of these sub-castes are categorically treated in the following pages.

### THE NAMBIDIS.

The Nambidis form one of the divisions of the *Antarálars* <sup>4</sup> and hold an intermediate position between Brahmans and Kshatriyas on the one hand and the Sudras (Nayars) on the other. Regarding the origin of these people, the following tradition is current. One of the Perumals of Kerala (Chola Perumal or the second of the Perumals) became so troublesome to the Brahmans that they resolved upon his removal. The Perumal was attacked, and in the struggle that followed was killed by them. When the Brahmans who were engaged in the murder returned to the place where their caste-men had

- 
1. Dwellers in temples, i. e., servants in temples.
  2. Issue of a female of a higher caste with the male of a lower one.
  3. Issue of a male of a higher caste with a female of a lower one.
  4. Castes between the Kshatriyas and the Sudras.

met, they were gladly welcomed and told to sit in their midst, but the thought of their having committed so heinous a crime so far overpowered them, that they felt themselves disqualified for seats along with the caste-men. They volunteered to sit apart on the threshold of the council room and said, "*Nám Patimél*" (we on the threshold). This incidentally accounts for the origin of their name, Nampati or Nambidi.

There are two main divisions among them, the members of one wear the *púnúl*, while those of the other are without it. Of the *púnúl* wearing members, again, there are two classes, viz., *Aiyinikoor Nambidis* and *Mattudésathu Nambidis*. The latter pollute the former by touch and are not allowed to dine with them. Those that do not wear the sacred thread are said to be Nayars who possess the title of Nambidi.<sup>1</sup>

Of the *púnúl* wearing Nambidis, the *Aiyinikoor Nambidis* or the members of the five families are historically and socially the most important; and the eldest male member possesses the special title of *Kakkát Kāranavapād*, enjoying special privileges at the hands of the rulers of Cochin, as the members of the family once held responsible posts in the militia of the State.

The most important person believed to have been engaged in the murder was the *Kakkát Nambuthiri*, a member of the *Kakkát* family, near Kunnamkulam. As a reward for the patriotic action, Chāvakad (the territory extending along the sea-board from Veliengod to the furthest limit of the Taluk) was bestowed upon him. His descendants were at first independent princes of Chavakad, but were too weak to resist the aggressions of their powerful neighbours, the Cochin Raja (whose capital then was at Perumpatappu, six miles south of Ponnani, where an old temple and the site of an old palace are still to be seen) and the Zamorin, who, bit by bit, deprived them of their territories. Finally, in 1791, the Nambidi was reduced to the humiliating position of his own revenue collector, and an allowance of Rs. 20,000 per annum being estimated at one-fifth of the revenue is paid to him from the Zamorin's Málikhána.<sup>2</sup>

The Nambidis have, since then, been regarded as having lost their status as Brahmans, and are now classed among the intermediate castes with a few more privileges than those

1. Kerala Avakasa Kramam, page 25.

2. Malabar Gazetteer, page 449.

enjoyed by members of the allied castes. The males wear the sacred thread and recite the *Gáyatri* ten times. Their marriage customs also are like those of the Brahmans, and the bridegroom who is also the *tali-tier* is a member of the same caste. Their women consort with the Nambuthiris by *sambandham* alliance, while the males generally consort with the Nayar women. Inheritance among them is in the female line.<sup>1</sup>

At public feasts they are not allowed to sit with the Nambuthiris, though the latter act as priests at their marriage ceremonies, *Srádha*, and purification at the end of birth and death pollutions, which, like those of Brahmans, last for ten days; nevertheless, even the Ambalavásis do not take their meals. Their women are called Manólpáds. The Nambidis numbered 478 at the last Census.

#### THE ADIKALS.

The word 'Adikals' means slaves or servants. They are said to have been originally Brahmans, and their degradation is ascribed to their having officiated as priests in Bhadrakali temples, to their having adored the goddess with the offerings of flesh and liquor, and also to their having partaken of the same.<sup>2</sup> They practise certain forms of exorcism, and worship some evil spirits—further facts which are said to account for their degradation. Even in temples where they officiate as priests they have to make room for Nambuthiris or Embrans on some occasions. The following is another story which throws some light on their origin. Wishing to test the fidelity of the Brahmans to the established rules of the caste, the great religious reformer Sankarachariar went to a liquor shop and drank some liquor. The Brahmans who accompanied him drank the same liquor without comprehending that such restrictions were not binding on the great reformer. The sage then went into a foundry and drank a cup of the molten metal; when a similar cup of the melted liquid was offered to them, they thankfully declined the offer as being Adikals or humble servants, accepting the degradation which such conduct brought upon them.<sup>3</sup> They too wear the sacred thread and repeat the *Gáyatri* ten times. Birth and death pollutions last

1. Kerala Avakasa Kramam, pages 32 and 33.

2. Kerala Viseshá Mahatmiam, page 46.

3. Travancore Manual, page 335.

for eleven days. They have their own priests. Their women are called *Adiyammamar* and wear the same ornaments (*tálikúttam*) as the Nambuthiri women, but they are not *gosha*. They numbered 25 at the last Census. They follow inheritance in the female line. *Pitáranmar* and *Pattóla Músath* also perform priestly service in the same temples; but the three castes neither interdine nor intermarry.

### THE MUTTATUS.

With regard to the origin and status of this sub-caste, there is some difficulty. They are generally classed among the Ambalavásis; and the caste name itself suggests that they are the eldest (of the Ambalavasis) as the *Ilayatús* are the youngest or the most degraded of the Brahmans.<sup>1</sup> There is a popular Malayalam saying which supports this statement. In the opinion of the most learned of the *Vaidikans* of the State, they are a class of inferior Brahmans, who are supposed to have suffered social degradation for having tattooed their bodies with figures representing the weapons of the God Siva and for eating the *nivédyam* (rice offered to him). They are said to be descended from the union of a *Sivadwija* Brahman with a pure Brahman girl, which is a *Prathilomá* union to some extent or one violating the rule of hypergamy. It is also said, that they are identical with the Nambians or Sivadwijas of the east coast; and this puts an end to all objections that might make one hesitate to place them amongst the Ambalavasis.<sup>2</sup> Their marital relations, duties in temples, their dependence on Nambuthiris for priestly functions and caste government, entitle them to be placed under the same division of the Ambalavasis. The members of this caste seem to have undergone some slight elevation, and they now observe the customs of the Brahmans in all respects.

1. Cochin Census Report, page 145.

The following are the titles bestowed upon them by the rulers in ancient times: (a) Nambi, a trustworthy person; (b) Nanthavanathil Nambi (given by one of the Zamorins—a title corresponding to minister); (c) Kovil Nambi, for having defended a temple from being plundered by one of the parties in a war between the Zamorin and the Vallavanad Raja; (d) Velutha Nambiyar, Karutha Nambiyar of Thiruvanchikulam; (e) Vattapalliathanikar of Suchendra; (f) Valia Muttatu of Tripunithura. (Vide judgment of Travancore High Court, Appeal Suit No. 428 of 1951, reversing that of the Zillah Court in O. S. No. 327 of 1951. The suit was filed by the famous and learned Pachi Muttatu against Gopala Varman Tirumulpad for defamation in respect of certain observations regarding the origin of the caste.)

2. Kerala Avakasa Kramam, pages 31. and 32.



The caste is now endogamous. The girls of the Múttatu are married both before and after puberty, and the formalities connected with the marriage are precisely those observed for Brahman girls. The eldest son marries for the sake of a son to offer oblations to the spirits of the departed, while the junior members of the family enter into *sambandham* with Nayar women. It is an expensive matter to obtain a bridegroom among them as among the Nambuthiris, and girls remain long without marriage. Polygamy is in vogue among them, and it is resorted to chiefly for the sake of the marriage of sisters or daughters. The customs connected with pregnancy, child-birth, and the post-natal ceremonies are the same as those prevailing among the Nambuthiris.

Inheritance is in the male line, and it is a violation of the law laid down by Parasurama.<sup>1</sup> The eldest male member manages the affairs of the family. In all matters connected with caste disputes, the Nambuthiri *Vaidiks* are consulted, and their decisions are final.

They are only Sivites in religion. In temples, they take the idol (*utsavavigraham*) in a *tadambu* (a sort of wooden shield with a small shelf in the centre in which the idol or *vigraham* is placed) in procession, sweep and wash the steps immediately in front of the shrine, and in fact they supply all articles used as offerings to the deity in temples, where they do all quasi-priestly functions, and for their services they get the lion's share of the offerings. They are on this account called Agaputhuvals (inside Puthuvals).

These are similar to those of the Brahmans. The son is the chief mourner, and a non-vedic Nambuthiri officiates as the priest for the performance of these ceremonies. The pollution for death as for birth lasts for ten days, and the services of the priest are employed for the purificatory ceremony which is performed at the end of that time. His services are also necessary for the purificatory ceremony of a girl who bathes on the fourth day after her first menses.

As already said, their social status is one of dispute, and in spite of the opinion of the *Vaidiks* that they are a class of inferior Brahmans, they are looked upon as only Ambalavasis. Yet, the highest class of

1. Kerala Avakasa Kramam, page 84.

Nambuthiris can cook and take their meals in the houses of those people who are said to pollute them by touch and whose water they cannot use when given by them, for fear of pollution. In the matter of giving *theertham* (sanctified water) and *prásádam* (leaving of offerings), a difference is made in some temples; the priest puts them in a vessel placed there for that purpose but does not give them in their hands as in the case of Brahmans. Again, when they take their meals in the *nálambalam* (the quadrangle of the temple), they have themselves to remove the leaves on which they have eaten, and this shows that they are in no way superior to the Ambalavasis, most of whom take the food cooked by them, while they eat the food only of the Brahmans, with whom there is no interdining. The caste-men live chiefly by their traditional occupations, and there are some who are physicians and Pandits. A few of them have, of late, begun to read English in schools, and some hold minor Government appointments. Their houses are called *illoms*, and their women *Manayammas* or *Illotammas*.

Mention must here be made of the *Músads*, who are a class of people closely allied to the Múttatu. They are of two classes, namely, *Karugá Músads* and *Kávil Músads*, both of whom wear *púnúl*. The former are so called because of *karuga*, a kind of grass used in the ceremonies, and the latter are a class of Ambalavasis identical with a class called *Pidárans*, who perform *púja* in Bhadrakali temples, and incident of which is the shedding of blood and the use of intoxicating liquor. There are some who do not wear *púnúl* nor perform *púja*, but attend to miscellaneous matters, *kazhakam* (temple service).

In matters of dress and ornaments, the Múttatu women are like those of the *Oóril Parishas*, a sub-division of the Nambuthiris.

#### THE ILAYATUS.

The members of this sub-caste were originally Nambuthiris who suffered social degradation for having officiated as priests at the funeral ceremonies of the Nayars whose family priests they have always been. They are divided into two minor divisions, called *Onnám Parisha* and *Rendám Parisha* (the first and second *parishas* or parties), and between these two divisions there is neither interdining nor intermarriage; nevertheless the males of the two parties make no objection to dining with one another. Further, the members of the first

Parisha do not allow those of the second to take part in their ceremonies.<sup>1</sup> Formerly, they used to eat the food cooked by themselves in the out-houses of the Nayars during the performance of *Srādhā* ceremonies, but this they have now declined to do except in well-to-do families. All customs relating to *Upanayanam*, marriage, funeral, and other ceremonies, as well as the laws of inheritance<sup>2</sup> are precisely similar to those of the Brahmans. They are not entitled to study the *Vedas*, but can recite the *Gāyatri*. They are their own priests. The Nambuthiris do not take their meals in the houses of these people, nor do Kshatriyas and Nambuthiris take water from their wells, which shows that the latter consider themselves liable to be polluted by their touch. In public feasts, after the Brahmans have been fed, they are allowed to sit together to take their meals, along with the Ambalavasis, but at a distance from them, with something between them which may prevent their being seen by the latter. They now live chiefly by their traditional occupations. Though Ilayatūs are somewhat more Brahmanical than the Muttatus, yet a vast majority of the Ambalavasis do not eat the food of these people. There are some temples where they are priests. Their houses are called *illoms*, the women are called *Elayorammās*, and though they dress and use personal ornaments of the same description as their Nambuthiri sisters, they, unlike the latter, are not *gosha*. A few years ago, the women of the sub-caste, like Nambuthiri sisters, used *mara kudas* (umbrellas to hide their faces) while going to temples for worship. The Nambuthiris resented at this and stopped it. This gave rise to a suit in one of the criminal courts. Some wealthy men among them are called Nambiyatis.

#### THE CHAKKIYARS.

The word 'Chákkiiyar' is said to be a corrupt form of *Slāghya Vākkukūr* (those gifted with excellence in words) or *Slāghya Kulzkkār* (men of respectability). They are the sons born to Nambuthiri women, found guilty of adultery after the date at which such adultery is said to have begun. The children of other Nambuthiris by their wives born after their connection with the adulteress are also classed as such. The boys who have

1. Ilayatus of the first division render priestly service to all Śudras above the Pallichans, while those of the second only to Pallichans.

2. Kerala Avakasa Kramam, pages 29 and 30. Bhugolapuram, Chapter 48.

already been invested with the *púníl* when their mother is declared an adulteress become Chákkíyars, while those who have not yet been so invested become Chakkiyar Nambiyars, the Pánpádan of Amarakosa. The girls join the latter caste and are known as Nángiyars. There is also another tradition with regard to the origin of these people. It is said that they were originally *paradésis* who belonged to the Súdā<sup>1</sup> caste—a caste the members of which were the offspring of Kshatriyas and Brahman women—and that a family of this caste migrated to Kerala in very ancient times.<sup>2</sup> When this family was about to be extinct, the offspring of an adulterous Brahman woman born during her criminal intimacy with other caste-men, but before detection, was adopted into the family and recognised as a separate caste. The Chakkiyars study the *Itihásās* and *Purá-nas*, and expound them by means of oral lectures known as *Chákkíyar-kúttu*, which is a permanent institution in most of the temples of Kerala.

The Chákkíyars perform all the post-natal ceremonies for their boys and girls at different ages. They have to perform the *Upanayanam* ceremony for boys and are allowed to recite the *Gáyatri* ten times. The tali-tying ceremony for girls is performed before they are twelve years of age, and the tali-tier who was once an *Arya Pattar* is now generally one of their own caste or a Thirumulpad, who may enter into *sambandham* with the girl after she comes of age. Save these, a Brahman alone can enter into matrimonial alliance with her. The males, on the other hand, can enter into wedlock with a girl of their own caste or of the Nambiyar. Their women are called *Illo-tammas*, and inheritance is in the female line. They are their own priests, but for purifications from birth and death pollutions which last for eleven days,<sup>3</sup> the Nambuthiris act as their priests. They live chiefly by their traditional occupation known as *Chákkíyar-kúttu*. It is a kind of performance which consists of recitations of puranic stories and their explanations in a dramatic style for the edification of the audience composed of Brahmans,

1. The members of this mixed caste used to keep horses and drive cars in days of yore. Only a particular family of this caste however became famous for its knowledge of the Puranas and other sacred writings. *Agni Purana*.

2. Cochín Census Report, page 148; and Travancore Manual, Vol. II, page 332.

3. There is a story that Cheraman Perumal had a wife of the Chakkiyar caste, and it was not approved of by the prominent men. This led to their separation, and their descendants observe ten days' pollution. Those of the others observe the pollution for eleven days.

Kshatriyas, Ambalavasis, and Sudras. It has a religious significance and hence never takes place outside the temples. It is invariably one of the items in some of the festivals in important temples and is sometimes performed at the instance of some individuals in fulfilment of vows made by them. It lasts nearly three hours between 2 and 5 P. M.

The Chakkiyar, generally a middle-aged man, is well versed in Sanskrit and Malayalam, and his theme or discourse is generally one of the scenes of the Rāmāyana or the Mahābhārata, such as the birth of Rama, his marriage with Sita, Hanuman's visit to Sita, the burning of Lanka (Ceylon), the marriage of Pāñchali, Subhādra, and Rugmani, Rājasuya Yagam, or Krishna's mission from the Pāndavas to Duryōdhana for the partition of the kingdom. Special works, Dūthavākyaṃ, Kounthēyāshṭakam and others, have also been composed by writers like Méppattur Narayana Bhattathiripad. Numerous *upakathas* or episodes are brought in by way of illustration, and a clever man well knows how to humour and hold the attention of the audience. "His dramatic delivery, the marvellous flow of words, and the telling humour of his utterances are such as to keep the hearers spell-bound. The performance takes place in a special building (*kūttāmbalam*) outside the quadrangular edifice of the temple. In the centre of the *kūttāmbalam* is a dais on which is placed a three-legged stool, on which the Chakkiyar sits like the Śūda of old, while delivering his performance at Naimisaranyam before the *Rishis*. In front of him a bell-metal lamp (*nilāvilakku*) is kept burning, the idea being that the Chakkiyar's discourse is in the presence of the God Agni. When the *kūttu* lasts for a number of days, the dais is generally decorated with a plantain tree having a bunch of plantains (*kalavāzha*) and festoons made of green cocoanut leaves (*kuruttōla*). His dress is in a very antiquated fashion with his crimson cloth turban, having its golden rim and silk embossments in the centre. On his right, sounding the cymbal, sits the Nangiyar, a woman of beauty, neat and simple in her white dress and fine knot of hair falling over the brow—an indispensable presence at the performance".<sup>1</sup> Behind him is the drummer (Nambiyar) with his copper metal drum called *mizhavu* sounded at short intervals to produce a dull, deep sound. It is a queer old instrument which has undergone no change since its first introduction by Parasurama. Sometimes, either

1. Travancore Manual, page 333.

when an opportunity offers itself or when he feels confident in the tolerance of the officials present, the Chakkiyar, with mild sarcasm, expatiates on the conduct of men in authority. He is an amiable critic and has a charming manner of dealing with the weak points in the character of men. He is equally clever in detecting their good qualities and praising them. In ancient times this was probably the method adopted, a method more effective than the newspaper press of these days, on account of the critics being more qualified, and the occasions more select. The Chákkiyar is a contented man, and is satisfied with the small remuneration of two rupees given him for his performances. Three families, the Ammanur,<sup>1</sup> the Kuttanchérri in Nellivayi of the Talapilly Taluk, and the Potbi,<sup>2</sup> monopolise the privilege of holding these performances in all the important temples of the State. There is also a fourth family in Kurumbranad of North Malabar, a member of which comes in when invited by any of the above three. Each Chákkiyar has a specially selected Nambiyar family at each station, and this was settled by a judgment of Trichur Munsiff's Court in O. S. No. 149 of 1058, which was confirmed on appeal. It is remarkable that in the *Purushártam* section of the *Kúdiyáttam* performance, Chakkiyars humour the audience with pithy verses accurately describing all the temple servants, not without excluding himself also. His origin and the ceremonies, the concealment of the *púnúl* (sacred thread) when approaching the august person of the sovereign, are plainly alluded to in these verses, which highly deserve to be published on account of their vivid descriptions. All the Chakkiyars do not know them, and those who have studied them would not furnish me with a copy of the verses. These are so rapidly recited that it is impossible for any clever man either to repeat or take notes of them afterwards.

The performances are of four kinds, namely, the ordinary one first described, *Kúdiyáttam*, *Mattavilāṣam* and *Parakkum Kúttu*, and they are described below.

*Kúdiyáttam* :—It is a performance in which there are two or more Chákkiyars whose costumes vary according to the characters in the puranic story whom they represent. The

1. Originally in British Malabar, but now in Irinjalakuda and Muzhikulam.

2. Originally in Vellarapilly, but now in Kottavam and Kitangur.

Nangiyar recites verses, and the Chákkiyar conveys their explanations in a dramatic style by means of dancing and gesticulations. The *Vidúshakan* (clown) orally explains the meanings of the verses and very clearly humours the audience. One of the Chákkiyars opens with an introduction to Sri Vásudéva (he who plays with Máya). By way of preface, he describes the six qualities, which a good speaker ought to possess during his performance, namely, (1) *Mádhuryam* (pleasant delivery), (2) *Aksharavyakti* (clearness of syllables), (3) *Padavyakti* (clearness of words), (4) *Laghutvam* (brevity in expounding), (5) *Swarāram* (sweet sounds) and (6) *Sthirata* (constancy). He first bows to the pot drum (*mizhāvu*), then to the audience and afterwards dances a queer dance for about a quarter of an hour humorously designated *Kákkakál*, or crow legs, from the resemblance to the crow's fantastic movements. His face is painted in green or red colours.

*Mattavilāsam* :—It is a kind of performance in which a Nángiyar plays important part, and is generally acted in fulfilment of a vow taken by a woman for the blessing of a son.

*Parakkum Kúttu* (flying performance) :—This is described by Dr. Gundert as an exhibition of the figure of *Garuda* (brahmīny kite) high in the air. A Cherakkal Raja was famous for this show in 1738. One of the rulers of Cochin had it performed at Kurikád in the last century. The famous poet Kalakattu Kunjan Nambiyar is said to have taken part in it. It is an expensive performance and only rulers can afford to have it acted.

*Kúttús* or performances are held in special buildings within the outer walls of temples, and among the audience only Brahmans are privileged to sit down, while the Sudras have to stand. All the time no one could either speak, offer any remarks or criticisms in the hall, lest the performance should cease; and this will, without any oral announcement, be made known to the audience by the removal of the head-gear (*muti*) by the Chakkiyar. An ordinary Chakkiyar sometimes takes much time for dressing, because of his inability to fascinate his audience by his discourse, whence the proverb "*Atā Chákkiyar aniyil pradhānam* (a dandy spends too much time for his toilette.)"

*Púdakam* :—The name is generally applied to a kind of discourse by either the Ambalavasis or the members of other

superior castes. The equipment of the performer is much simpler.

### THE NAMBIYARS.

There are four classes of the *púnúl*-wearing people to whom the term "Nambiyar" is applied, and they are—

1. Pushpakan or Pushpakan Nambiyar.
2. Thiyyáti Nambiyar.
3. Chakkiyar Nambiyar.
4. Chengazhi Nambiyar.

There is also a class of Nayar Nambiyars, so called because of their having been at one time the chiefs of territories.

1. *Pushpakan* or *Pushpakan Nambiyar*:—Regarding the origin of this sub-caste, the following traditions are extant. A Brahman had connection with his wife during the menstrual period, for which they were both put out of caste. Another story is that a Brahman who suspected his pregnant wife of criminal intimacy with another man had her out-casted. She gave birth to a female and died, but the latter was reared by Parasurama and in due course was married. She and her descendants were known as Pushpakans.<sup>1</sup>

Their marriage customs are similar to those of the Brahmans, but their women (both those who are married and those who are widows) may enter into *sambandham* either with the Nambuthiris or with their own caste-men. But their women, who are called Pushpinis or Brahmanis, may, either during the life-time or after the death of their husbands, enter into *sambandham* with a Nambuthiri or even one of their caste-men. At the tali-tying ceremony of all castes from and above the high caste Nayars, these women are invited to sing songs chiefly puranic dealing with the marriage celebrations of Sita, Parvati, or Lakshmi. In Bhagavati temples they are employed to sing *Dárika Vadham*, and *Sumba* and *Nisumba Vadham*, i. e., songs relating to the death of the demons, namely, Darikan, Sumban, and Nisumban.

As among the Variyars, the Pushpakans follow both the matriarchal and patriarchal systems of inheritance. The birth and death pollutions last for eleven days. Their traditional occupation consists of sweeping the inner precincts of the temples, cleaning the utensils (*talikazhakam*) or collecting flowers and

1. Bhugola Puranam, chap. 47.



making garlands (*málakazhakam*). In this respect they are similar to the *Dámakarans* of the east coast temples.

Among the Pushpakans the males are styled Nambiyars, but the titled individuals are known as Nambissans or Mooses in some places, while in others Pushpakans or Unnis. The names 'Nambiyars' and 'Mooses' are confusive and vague, especially as the former is applied to six and the latter to seven of the sub-castes below the Brahmans. Further, the word 'Mqos' is applied to the personal attendants of Nambuthiris, to the teachers in the art of warfare, and in former times was applied to some of the aristocratic families as well as to warriors of the Taliyatis.

2. *Thiyyattu Unni* or *Thiyyati Nambiyar* :—In Bhagavati temples, the Thiyyattu Unnis paint the image of the goddess in lively colours, while praising her in song and propitiating her with offerings, and particularly are their services requisitioned when small-pox prevails in any locality. They are considered to mitigate the wrath of the small-pox demon by certain ceremonies, and during that period the occupants vacate the houses, leaving the Thiyyattu Unni in sole charge. In the temples also they perform similar ceremonies for the welfare of the inhabitants of the stricken village. Probably, their degradation arises from work of this nature.<sup>1</sup>

In the State they are better known as Thiyyati Nambiyars, drawers of the image of Ayyappan, painting him in lively colours in temples dedicated to him, singing songs in his praise and performing all manner of propitiating worship. They are wearers of the *púníl*, and, as among Nambuthiris, only the eldest son marries, while the junior members contract *sambandham* with Nayar women. Their girls undergo the tali-tying ceremony, and the bridegroom who ties the *tali* is a member of their own caste, and the consummation of the marriage does not take place until the night of the fourth day. If he wishes to have her as a wife, he takes her to his own house, and the children born of this union inherit the father's property. If, on the other hand, she is not taken as a wife, she resides with her own family, and consorts with a Brahman or a Kshatriya; the children of such union follow the inheritance in the female line. Among the Thiyyattu Unnis, the birth and

<sup>1</sup> Cochin Census Report, 1901, Vol. I, page 148.

death pollutions last for eleven days. Their own caste-men act as priests, while Brahmans officiate for the purificatory ceremonies. The number of this sub-caste is very limited, and only seven were returned at the last Census.

They follow their traditional occupation which is known as *Thiyyattam* (fire-dancing or fire-walking) but which seldom takes place at the present time. It is only a kind of *pija* performed in temples dedicated to Ayyappan generally during *Mandalam* (forty days from the 15th November to the 25th December), but also on certain auspicious days at the request of the votaries who defray expenses thereof. A small quadrangular edifice is made and covered with cloths or decorated with the green leaves of the the cocoanut palm. Beneath this is drawn the figure of the sylvan deity either on foot or mounted on a tiger, painted in a heterogeneous mixture of black, red, yellow, green, and white. At the corners of the edifice stand clean bell-metal lamps with cotton wicks soaked in cocoanut oil. At the head of the painting is a small stool on which reposes the image of Ayyappan. When the priest (*Sānthikkāran*) finishes the performance of the *pija*, the Nambiyar begins his songs accompanying himself by rhythmic beats on his drum. At the end of his songs, he stands up and worships Ganapati, Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, and Saraswati and last but not least Ayyappan in a *tantric* form with the movement of his fingers and hands. He then takes a piece of cloth dipped in oil, and, with one end ablaze, goes round the edifice several times. This is called *Thiri ozhikkal* (going round with the burning wick). The last item of the *pija* is the appearance of the *Velichapād* (oracle) on the spot, and he may be either himself or one of the Nayar caste. He works himself up to a state of frenzy and moves up and down destroying the edifice with a sword and wiping out the painted figure with his feet. At length, as one inspired, he speaks to the votaries proclaiming the deity's satisfaction or otherwise of the performance. He then goes on to break the cocoanuts sometimes numbering as many as 12,000.

Though the *pija* is termed fire-walking or fire-dancing, this is but seldom performed. In cases where it is so intended, a cart-load or two of wood is burnt and the red hot ashes are strewn on the ground. Near to this, the priest of the temple

performs a *púja* on a floral diagram (*padmam*) drawn on the ground. The part of *Velichapáda* is played by the Nambiyar himself who, in the course of his inspired and unconscious movements, treads down the red hot ashes. This performance of the Nambiyars is totally dissimilar to the fire-walking in vogue among some of the Tamil castes both in the Chittur Taluk of the State and elsewhere. Among the latter, a pit is dug about 20 feet in length, 12 feet in breadth, 4 feet in depth. In this, several cart-loads of fuel are burned and reduced to glowing red hot ashes, over which the priest along with those under a vow walks up and down several times and escapes unhurt.

3. *Chakkiyar Nambiyar or Nambiyar proper* :—They too, like the Chakkiyars, are the offspring of unholy connections, but wear no sacred thread. Their women who are called Nángiyars enter into *sambandham* with their caste-men, Chákkiyars, Thirumulpads, and Nambuthiris. The males take their wives either from their own caste or from the Sudras. The Nambiyars may sit with the Chákkiyars at meals, but a Nangiyar may not sit with an *Illótamma*, for the women, as in other castes, are zealously orthodox. They follow the inheritance in the female line. They numbered seventy-two at the last Census. The great Malayalam poet, Kalakkattu Kunjan Nambiyar, was a member of this sub-caste.

In the *Kúdiyattam* performance, the Chakkiyar and the Nangiyar together appear on the stage. The Nangiyar also has her periodical performance called *Nangiyar-kúttu*. It is held for twelve days in Chingam (August-September) in Trichur, for twelve days in Médam (April-May) in Pazhayannur and for seven days in Kumbham (February-March) in Tiruvilvamala.

If an *Agnihotri Nambuthiri* dies in the neighbourhood, the local Nangiyar has to go to the cremation ground to perform what is called *Chudala-kúttu*.

The Nangiyar's wedding ornament is *pollattáli*; and the other ornaments for the neck are *enthram* and *kuzhal*.

4. *Chengazhi Nambiyar* :—The original habitat of this class of Nambiyars is in a village specially known as Chengazhikode, in the Talapilly Taluk. They have no temple service. The priests who officiate at their ceremonies are a class of non-vedic Nambuthiris.

There are two families near Nelluvayi, the members of which are said to be the descendants of two old petty chiefs, and the sites of their hill-forts are still to be seen. Mullakkal Bhagavati is their patron deity.

The avarice and greed of these Nambiyars are proverbial. Some are cultivators.

The following story is ascribed to their origin. It is said that a Nambuthiri had three sons. One day, a merchant, with a view to test their honesty, entrusted them with a certain quantity of gold, and went to them after ten days to get it back, when one of them asked him why he came so late as to receive the copper they were entrusted with, while the other wished him to take back the piece of silver he had given them for safe keeping. The third son called him a thief. Their father who overheard this told him to take back what he had given. Fully aware of the dishonesty of his sons, the father called out the son who mentioned copper, and made him a Chengazhi Nambiyar, that is, a Nambiyar of Chengazhikode (a tract of country so called in central Talapilly). The son who spoke of silver was made Vellámthuruthu Nambiyar, while the third son became Pilápetta Nambiyar. Thus, the three Brahman youths for their dishonesty became the progenitors of the three classes of the Nambiyars.<sup>1</sup>

#### THE VARIYARS.

The Variyars, an important community in the State, are more numerous than the members of other sub-castes of the Ambalavasis and are to be found in all parts of the State. Regarding their origin, there are as many as five different accounts, and the most accepted theory is that they are the descendants of a Brahman married to a Sudra wife. The term 'Variyar' is said to be a corrupt form of 'párasava,'<sup>2</sup> meaning the son of a Brahman duly wedded to a Sudra woman. According to another tradition, the word is derived from 'varijam,' one who has sprung from water. It is said that Parasurama, who induced Brahmans to colonise Kerala, directed the Sudras to do menial service for them. The former complained that the latter were unfit for temple service, because they were meat-eaters. Parasurama, thereupon, created out of water a new caste of people for temple service.

1. Mackenzie Manuscripts, 18th May 1819.

2. Mahabharata, Anusasana Parva, Chap 48, verse 5.

The statement here is somewhat figurative, and all that is meant by it is that they came out of water after a plunge bath, as an elaborate purificatory ceremony of a section of the Nayars for the temple service. A third derivation of the word 'Variyar' is from 'váruka,' which means to sweep. Of this again, two accounts are given; according to one, the Variyars are the sweepers of the inner court-yard of the temple; according to the other, a certain Súdra woman who was doing menial service in a temple was ordered by a Brahman employed there to sweep a bone probably dropped by a bird in its flight.<sup>1</sup> She did so, but was, for this, out-casted by her own people. The Brahmans, however, allowed her to continue the service in the temple, and even made no objection to herself and her descendants consorting with Brahmans. Thus, there arose the sub-caste of Variyars. The fifth and the last account as given in the *Bhúgóla-puranam* is, that a certain old Brahman married a young girl. Wishing for a child, she began her devotions to the local deity, one portion of which was the preparation of a flower-garland every day for the village God. In due course, the prayer of the girl was granted, and she conceived. The old husband suspecting her of infidelity discarded her, and her flower-garland was no longer acceptable. She was however resolute in her devotion and placed her garland on the steps leading to the shrine, mentally offering it for the wearing of the God. The garland, however, was seen on the person of the God's image, day after day, and this miracle attracted the notice of the villagers, who readily believed that her conception was the result of the God's blessing. She was not, however, re-admitted into her community, and a separate caste was thus started, known as Variyar with the occupation of making garlands, and rendering services of a similar nature in temples. Her children were supported by Azhuvancheri Thampurakkal, who accommodated them in his *patipura* or gate-house. She and her descendants were henceforth known as *Patipura Váriyar*, and one of this caste acts as the trusted attendant of this famous royal priest. There are, it is said, eight subdivisions among the Variyars, but they do not appear to exist in the State; they are known only by their generic name.

1. Travancore Manual, pages 338-339; Kerala Viseshá Mahatmyam, page 53.

The Variyars resemble the Pisharotis in many respects.

Manners and customs. They are Sivites as the others are Vaishnavites; and the names of the former are those of Siva, while the latter go by Vaishnavite appellations. They have no *Upanayanam* and do not therefore wear the sacred thread. There is a ceremony called *Sivadeeksha* at the age of sixteen or earlier which alone qualifies them to be a *grihasta*. The young Variyar dresses himself in the orthodox Brahmanical fashion and is decked with Sivite marks of *vibhúti* (holy ashes) and *rudráksha* when he goes like a *Brahmachari* for alms (*bhiksha*), and walks seven steps in the northern direction as a Kshatriya on a pilgrimage to Benares.

A Variyar can marry a woman of his own caste (*Kudivekkuka*) or form a *sambandham* with her or with a Nayar girl. A Variyar girl may marry either before or after puberty. The bridegroom who is also the *táli-tier* is a young man of her caste *enangu*. The ceremonies connected with it are somewhat similar to those of the Brahmáns at the same time as the *táli-tying*. Along with the *táli-tying*, *lajahóman*, *páhnigrahanam*, and *saptapati* have also to be performed. No *vedic* mantrams are uttered, but their translations in Sanskrit are given to be recited. In a room specially decorated, the girl remains for four days, holding in her hand a bell-metal mirror given her by her mother. The other formalities during the next three days are similar to those of the Pisharotis. The consummation takes place on the night of the fourth day after the performance of *Nándimukha* and a *púja* to Ganapati. There is only a pretence of cohabitation, and the married couple have soon to come out, bathe, and drink *punyáham* (sanctified water) which is considered to relieve them of the impurities arising from their supposed cohabitation. Then they dine together. The bridegroom can keep her as a wife, or the young woman may consort with a Brahman, Kshatriya, or one of her own castemen. No ceremony is performed for a woman about to become a mother. She may have *bhajanam* (adoration of a deity) in the local temple and take *panchagavyam* with some medicinal preparation for the safe delivery and health of the child. Soon after delivery the mother and the baby are bathed. The former bathes also on the fourth, seventh, tenth, and twelfth day, after which she is free from pollution, by taking consecrated water from the Brahman priest. The ceremony

of naming and feeding the child, and tonsure is similar to that in vogue among other high caste-men.

When a Variyar girl comes of age, the event is announced to the caste-men of the neighbourhood by a kind of loud shouts (*váikurava*). An *enanga* young woman rubs her body with gingelly oil, bathes her and then seats her in a separate room, on a dark coloured blanket (*karimpatam*), surrounded by a line of paddy to indicate that the space within is impure or polluted. In her hand is given a bell-metal mirror (*val kannáti*) without which she cannot stir out for any purpose. In the same room are kept a measure of paddy and rice and a lighted bell-metal lamp (തിരിച്ചെടുത്ത). She is dressed in a double cloth (*enapudava*). Presents of betel leaves, nuts, cocoanuts and clothes are received from friends and relatives.

On the third day there is a luncheon of milk pudding (*pál kanji*, rice boiled in milk) to the friends and relatives who are invited. The walls of the *vatakkini* (northern hall) are painted with pictures of the ornaments of the girl. A lighted lamp and *ashtamangallyam* are also placed there in a metal plate.

The girl is purified by a bath on the morning of the fourth day. With a song to Ganapati, the girl is assisted while bathing, by a Chithiyan girl who places in her hand and other parts of the body, some rice, turmeric powder and oil. A bark of a plantain tree shaped in the form of a triangle, with lighted torches stuck into the sides, is waved round her body, as she plunges into the water. This is done either to avert the potency of evil-eye, or to set her free from demoniacal influences if any. After the bath, the girl, dressed and decked out in her best and accompanied by a procession of young girls who are mostly her friends and relatives, returns home, with the matrons holding hanging lamps (*thúkkuvilakku*) and the vessel containing *ashtamangallyam* in front of her. There is then a grand feast to the friends and relatives of the family who are invited.

After a similar plunge-bath on the morning of the fifth day, the girl is again purified by a dose of sanctified water (*punyáham*) given by a Nambuthiri Brahman. She can then mingle with the rest of her family.

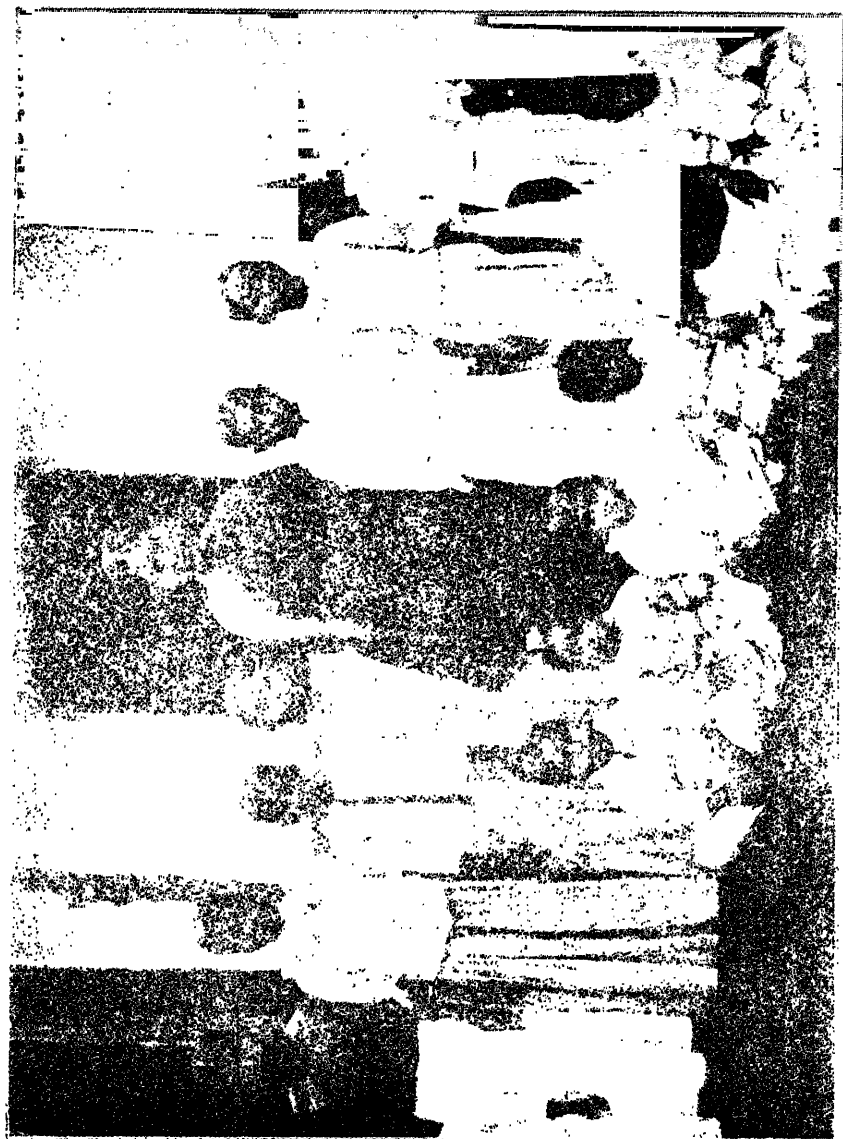


TELUGU DEVANGA WOMEN AND MEN IN THEIR WORKSHOP.

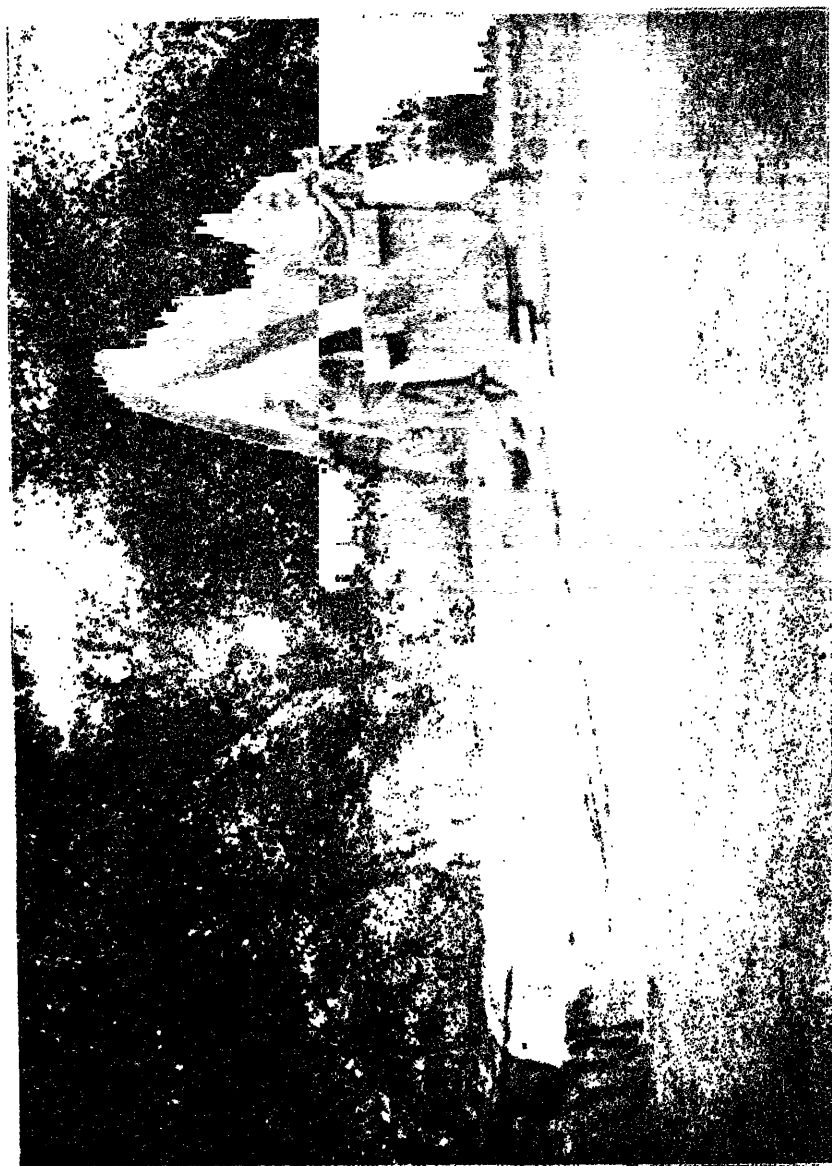




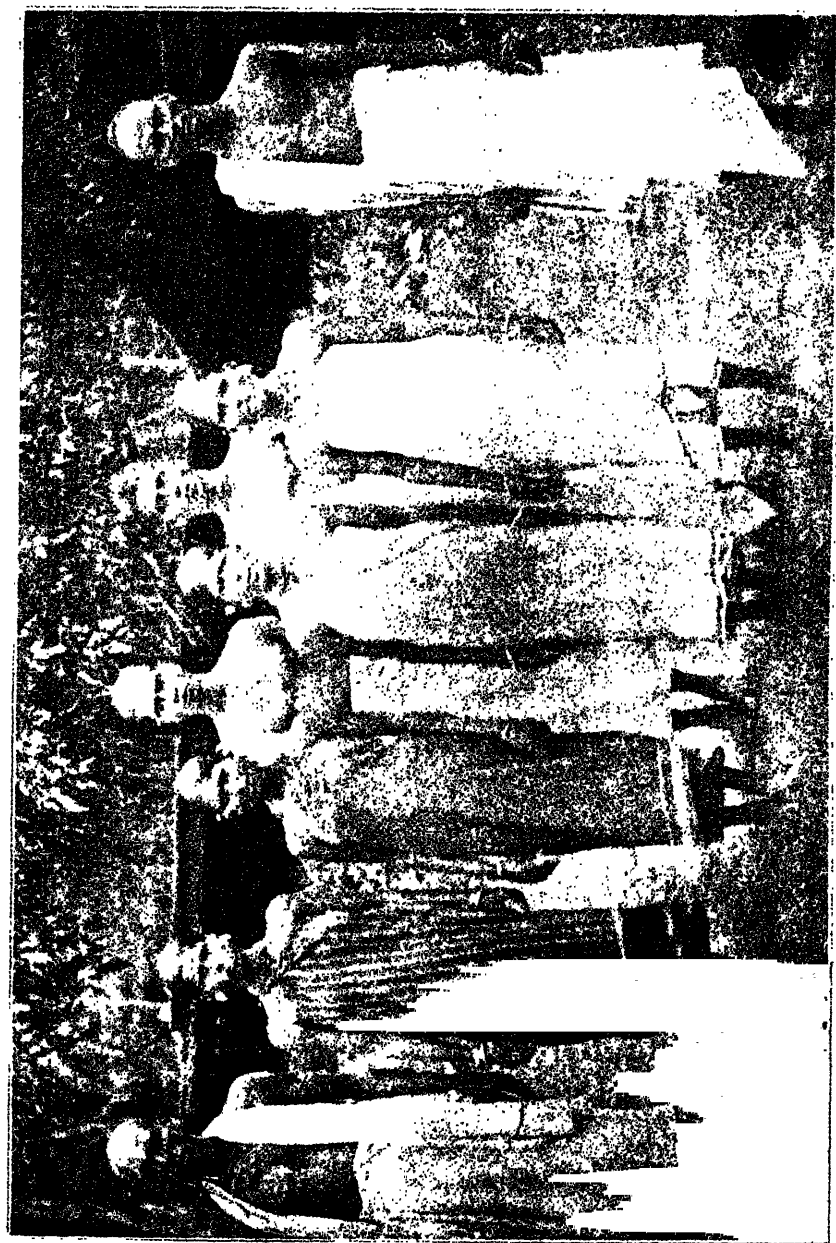
A GROUP OF KONKANI BRAHMANS.



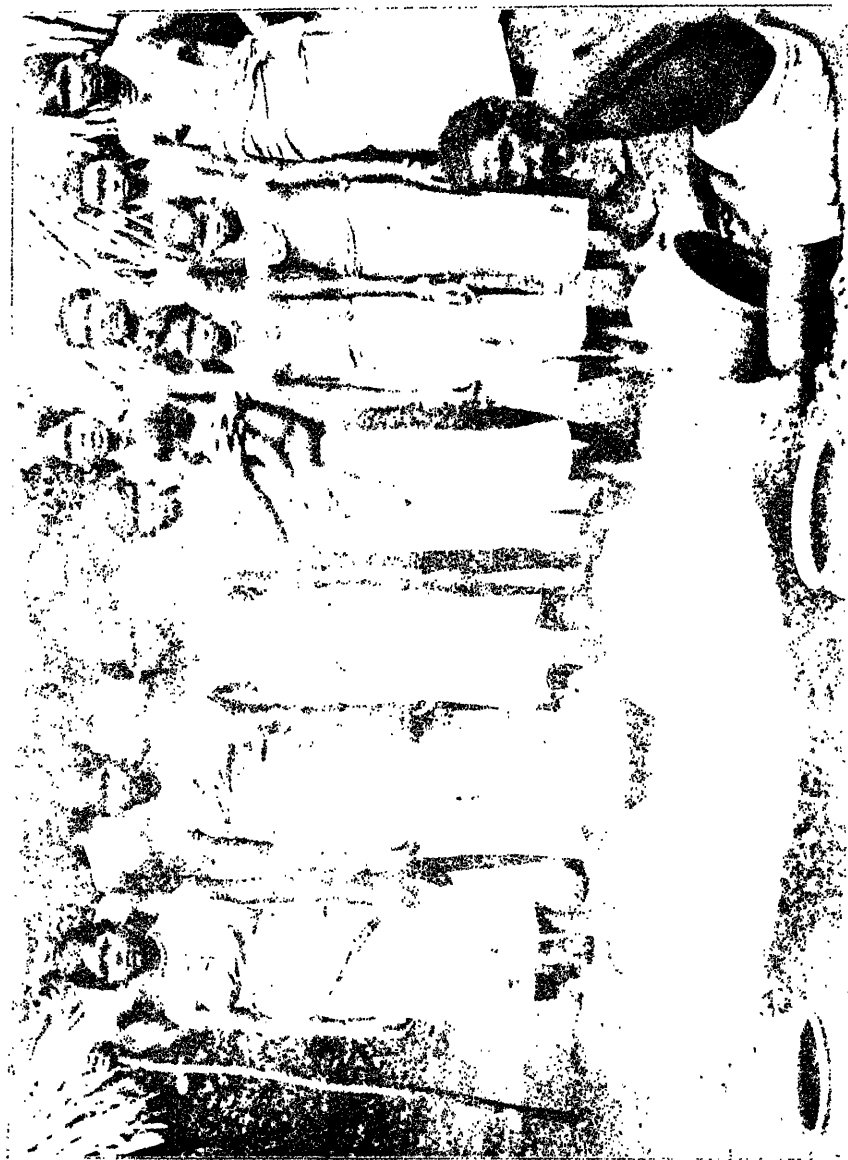
A GROUP OF KONKANI WOMEN AND GIRLS.



A CHAKKAN AND HIS OIL MILL.



A GROUP OF KUDIMI CHETTIES.



A GROUP OF KUMBARANS (POTTER).



A GROUP OF ODDANS.



OTANS (POTTERS).

The Variyars generally follow inheritance in the female line. There is also a combined system of inheritance. Where a Variyar forms a *sambandham* with a woman of his own caste, the children follow the mother, and the inheritance is in the female line. If, however, after *sambandham*, the woman resides with the husband in his house, and there she has children, these children inherit their father's property. If a woman, taken to her husband's house, has children, then becomes a widow, and marries another, the children by the second husband also inherit the property of the first husband's family. If, in a family, the brother marries and brings his wife to live with him while his married sister is not taken away by her husband but left in her own family and there visited by him, the children of the brother and sister inherit the property in equal shares; the children of the man cannot claim any property belonging to the maternal line, and the woman's children can claim no property from their father or his family. The custom is much in vogue in Travancore; but in this State only one instance has come under my notice in the course of my investigations.

The Variyars are Sivites in religion. Their dead bodies are burned with the fire obtained from a *hómam* (sacred fire) performed on the cremation ground in the southern part of their compounds. The chief mourner is the nephew and in some cases the son also acts that part. The pollution is for twelve days, and on the thirteenth day, the agnates bathe early in the morning, take *punyâham*, and thus become free from pollution. Then he makes the rice-ball offerings to the spirit of the departed, and performs the *srâdha* both for their parents and their uncles. Offerings are also made to the deceased whom they believe to be the servants of Siva and a member of the *gôtra* of Kailasa. In the *Keralotpathi*, the Variyars are referred to as *Kailasa-vâsiṣ* or dwellers in Mount Kailas.

Members of this caste follow the occupation of temple servants. Some are rich land-owners occupying high social position, while others are skilled in astrology, and like the Pisharotis, are learned in Sanskrit. Many receive advanced western education and enter the lists of the learned professions. The majority, however, of the Variyars are comparatively poor and live a hand-to-mouth existence; nevertheless, their daily needs are insured to them for life by their service



(*kazhakam*) in temples—a service which is of two kinds, *mála-kazhakam* (garland making), and *talikazhakam* (sweeping). In most cases, the temple priest (an Embran or a Nambuthiri) is the husband of one of the girls in the family, and the proverb that 'the Embran priest provides the lamp for the Variyar's supper' is indicative of the latter's dependence on the former; but, on the whole, this caste is perhaps the most progressive among the Ambalavasis.

The house of a Variyar is styled *variyaṁ*, and the women are called *Varisars*. This caste at the last Census numbered 2,209.

### THE PISHAROTIS.

The origin of this sub-caste is somewhat interesting. A Brahman, wishing to become a *sanyāsi* or ascetic, removed the *pūñīl* from his person. But probably alarmed at the austerity of an ascetic's life, he changed his mind before the irrevocable step had been taken, and elected to return to the life of a *grihasta* (house-holder) by marrying a Variyar woman. He was called a *Pishara*—as one who on the threshold of renouncing the worldly pleasures had elected to return to its pitfalls, its passions and its strifes—and he and his descendants were henceforth known as Pisharotis. According to another tradition, they are said to have been temple servants during the Budhistic period, and their puzzling position among the Málabar castes, half monk and half layman, does not justify the fanciful origin given above.<sup>1</sup>

No *Upanayanam* ceremony (the ceremony of investiture of the holy thread) is performed for the Pisharoti youngsters, as their original ancestor had relinquished it. In place of it, however, they are initiated into a *Vaishnavite mantram* called *Ashtákshara*. A consecrated pot of water is poured over the lad's head (*kalasam ozhikkuka*) as a preparatory sacrament. Then, dressed in the *thatṭu* form (orthodox religious costume in Malabar which the high class of Nambuthiris and Kshatriyas wear on ceremonial occasions), he makes a pretence of going on a pilgrimage to Benares, which corresponds to the termination of *Brahmacharya* stage. It is only after this ceremony that he can marry. A Pisharoti may enter into conjugal relations with a woman of his own caste or a Nayar

1. Travancore Census Report, page 264. Kerala Avakasa Kramam Travancore Manual, page 337.

woman. The Pisharoti girls are married either before or after puberty. The tali-tying ceremony is performed by a young man of the same caste. *Pānigrahanam* or taking of the bride's hand in that of the bridegroom is the binding portion of the ceremony, and the *hómam* (offering to the sacred fire) is also made by the bridegroom. An essential part of the ceremony is the planting of a jasmine shoot in a room, specially decorated for the purpose, in which the bride remains for four days holding in her hand a mirror (*vál kannúti*) given her by her mother. In the mornings and evenings, the bride and bridegroom are placed side by side, while Pisharasyars wave about their faces a metal plate filled with rice and two halves of a cocoanut containing oil and lighted cotton wicks. The consummation takes place on the night of the fourth day, as among the Nambuthiris. It is left to the choice of the *táli-tier* to keep the woman as his wife, and, if he elects to do so, must provide her with clothes and other necessities of life except food. If he does not choose to do so, she is at liberty to consort with a Brahman or a Kshatriya.

In general, they observe the matriarchal system of inheritance. Invariably they take to themselves names of Vishnu or Lakshmi in one of their many manifestations, and no Pisharoti will ever serve in a Sivite temple. To a certain extent they are serpent worshippers, for on *Ayillyam* day in the month of Kanni (September-October) Brahmans make offerings (*sarpa bali*) to snakes in Pisharoti compounds, as in other Sudra compounds as ordained by Parasurama.

The funeral customs of the Pisharotis are very similar to those of *sanyásis*. A pit is dug and partly filled with salt, sand and ashes; in it the dead body is placed in a sitting posture and a hymn is sung which means 'may water go with water, air with air'; 'may this *Panchabhúta sarira* (body made up of the five elements) resolve itself into its component parts in nature.'

As in the case of a *sanyási*, who is a *Jeevan muktha* or one liberated from bondage of the flesh in the living body, so a Pisharoti is believed to have no subtle body and hence to require no offerings after death. A few offerings are however made, but they are more as a prayerful memory than for the soul of the departed. Pollution is observed for twelve days,

On the eleventh day, a ceremony corresponding to the *Ekodista Sradha* of the Brahmans is performed. A knotted piece of *kusa* grass representing the departed soul is taken to a temple near at hand, where a lighted lamp symbolical of Vishnu is worshipped, and prayers are offered up by the Brahmans, for the absorption of the departed soul in Vishnú's divine substance. This ceremony is repeated at the end of every year. There is also a commemorative rite every year on the day of asterism of death. For these and other ceremonials, the priests are their own caste-men.

The traditional occupation of the caste-men is the preparation of flower garlands for Vishnu temples. There are some good Sanskrit scholars among them, and they are hereditarily employed as *asáns* or tutors in aristocratic families. They are so very conservative that they seldom dine out, and, if perchance they do so eat, it is only from the hands of the Brahmans, Kshatriyas or Muttatus. Variyars and Pisharotis interdine, but they allow no intermarriage, nor do they take part in each other's ceremonies. At the last Census they numbered 1190.

#### THE POTHUVALS.

The word 'Pothuval' means a common person or general servant, and is applied to two sections of the caste having widely different functions—*Mála Pothuváls* (garland makers), and *Chenda Pothuváls* (drummers). The caste is believed to have sprung from a Brahman's connection with a Sudra woman. The caste-men are like the Nayars in many respects, and are generally employed in temples as keepers of stores of a miscellaneous nature. It is said that, at Irinjalakuda, a Pothuval alone can shave the Thachudaya Kaimal on installation. His family has a perpetual hereditary allowance therefor from the pagoda. Their birth and death pollutions last for twelve days.<sup>1</sup> They do not interdine with the Pisharotis and Variyars. They numbered 366 at the last Census.

#### THE MARARS.

The Márars are said to be Sudras and rightly to be classed among the Nayars; but owing perhaps to their close connection with the temple services and the absence of inter-dining and inter-marriage with the Nayars, they are classed

1. Cochin Census Report, 1901, page 149. The caste-men in some places curiously observe pollution for 13, 15, and 18 days respectively. (Kerala Visésa Mahatmyam, page 54).

as a sub-caste of the Ambalavasis. They are generally drummers, musicians, and store-keepers in temples. Like the Thiyyáti Nambiyars, some among them draw the figure of the Goddess in Bhagavati temples and sing songs in her praise; these are known as Kurups. Their customs in connection with the tali-tying ceremony, *sambandham*, inheritance, and pollution, are precisely similar to those of the Nayars; but the tali-tying is generally performed by Thirumulpads in the southern and by their caste-men (*enangans*) in the northern Taluks of the State. The Brahmans, Kshatriyas, or they themselves form *sambandhams* with the Marar women. Their own caste-men act as priests for funeral and other ceremonies. The period of pollution observed by the caste-men is fifteen days, and this as well as the undeniable facts that a Nambuthiri can neither cook his meals nor eat in a Marar's house, that their women are called Ammas and not Marasiyars, that they have no *punyāham* at the hands of the Nambuthiris, and the custom of nose-boring among females, etc., all seem to show that they belong to the Sudras, rather than to the Ambalavasis. There are two minor subdivisions among the Marars, the members of one of which, having temple service, profess superiority to those of the other, and are the Ambalavasis. The former are called *Chenda Puthuváls* in some places, while the latter render the services of the *Cheetayans* in the houses of the Nambuthiris and in those of their *Atiyals* who are the Nayars of the Sudra division.

There is, about the famous temple at Vaikam, in North Travancore, a tradition, that, once upon a time, there survived only a female member in a Marar's family for the drum-beating service. The manager thereof wished to deprive her of her daily perquisite (boiled rice), because no woman could by custom perform this service. The usual *Utsavam* (feast) was then going on, and she could not perform the Marar's work. She was deeply aggrieved at this, but had a vision to bathe and do her duties in the temple, as before, though against the orders of the manager, who also had a similar vision to allow her to do her usual work. Accordingly, she discharged her duties satisfactorily, during *Sri Bhuta bali* (offerings to the *Bhútas* or elementals), when they were all visible in a body with gaping mouths to eat up the sacrificial offerings which were thrown on the floor by the high priest (*tantri*) who was much threatened

by them. Meanwhile, Bhadrakali Mattapally Nambuthiri, a *tantri* of a village near Angamali, was then passing along the back-water. He was aware of the incident in the temple and promised to appease the wrath of the elementals, if he were given a share in the rites of the temple. There was no alternative, the old *tantri* had to yield. All were set right. Henceforth, there have been two *tantries*, and the Marar's family afterwards prospered and still continues the service in the temple.

It is said that a Tamil tribe called 'Máranmár' founded the Pandiyan kingdom, and 'Maran' was a title of their kings.

One section of the Marars at Trichur allege that they were brought to Kerala by Parasurama and were given special honours and privileges. A few members of these families escort the flower garlands from the flower garden *Pallithāman* to the temple. Until recently, the Devaswam used to give a small quantity of paddy for the tali-tying ceremony of every girl in these families, and a measure of cocoanut oil during the *Sivarathri* festival.

#### THE SÁMANTHANS.

The word 'Sámanthan' is a generic name for a group of castes which form the aristocracy of Malabar, formerly ruling over varying extents of territories. With regard to the origin of this caste, it is said that they are the descendants of the Kshatriyas, who, divesting themselves of the *púníl* (holy thread), fled from the wrath of Parasurama, and lived in jungles without the performance of *sandhyá-vandanam* and other prayers; whence they were known as Sámanthans or those without *mantrams*. This story, says Mr. H. A. Stuart, is supported neither by philology nor by anything else. There is also a tradition that the great Cheraman Perumal had married a woman of the Samanthan caste, and had several sons and daughters. His daughters by the legitimate wife were allowed to enter into wedlock with the Brahmans, while those of the Samantha wife formed matrimonial alliances with the then rulers of territories, and the first son by the Samantha woman and his nephews became the Zamorins of Calicut.<sup>1</sup>

There is some reason to suppose that the Samanthans are really Nayars, and that their claim to the higher rank is of recent date; that such recruitments are going on is indicated by the difference between the number of persons returned as

1. Kerala Avakasa Kṣa nam, paragiaphs 33-36.

Samanthans in the Malabar Censuses of 1901 and 1891 (4351; 1225 respectively), a difference which is far above the normal increase of population.<sup>1</sup> They are generally said to be higher in the social scale, and yet their customs closely resemble those of the Nayars.<sup>2</sup>

There are several minor divisions among the Samanthans, namely, (a) Nambiyar, Unithiri, Adiyódi, all belonging to North Malabar, and (b) Nedungadi, Vellodi, Eradi, Thirumulpad, belonging to South Malabar. In the last Census of the Cochin State, only one Unithiri and fifty Adiyódís were found as living in the State.

The marriage customs of the Samanthans are similar to those in vogue among the Kshatriyas as already described. The bridegrooms who tie the *táli* round the necks of the Samantha girls are generally Kshatriyas; but Thirumulpads generally act as such for the weddings of girls of poor families; while the members of the Cranganur Chief's family act as bridegrooms in the *kóvilakams* of Calicut.

Their women form *sambandham* alliance with Vedic Nambuthiri Brahmans or Kshatriyas, while the males generally form *sambandham* with Nayar women. No *Seemantham* or *Pumsavanam* ceremonies are performed for women who are about to become mothers; but they perform the *Pulikudi* ceremony of the Nayars. All ceremonies among the Sámanthans are performed without *mantrams* and are similar to those of the Brahmans and Kshatriyas who observe *Boudháyaṇa Sūtras*. Nambuthiris act as priests for all ceremonies performed from birth to death of the Samanthan (male and female). Their birth and death pollutions last for eleven days. They have, as a rule, fifteen days' pollution.

With regard to their social status, there is some dispute; some claim to be a little above the Nayars, while others among the caste-men claim to be ranked below the Kshatriyas on the following grounds:—(a) they are forbidden to eat meat; (b) the Brahman priests who officiate at the purificatory ceremonies in their houses, which are purified by the sanctified water, need not subsequently bathe; (c) they perform the funeral oblations on the *darbha* grass, like the Brahmans and the Kshatriyas;

1. Malabar Gazetteer, page 113.

2. Madras Census Report, 1891.

(d) as soon as the Samanthans are freed from pollution by *punyāham* (sanctified water); they can enter the temples; (e) they are privileged to eat with the *Adhyan Nambuthiris* in the same room, though not in the same row; (f) high class Nambuthiri Brahmans need not bathe when they receive gifts from them in hands; (g) *pūjas* to deities are performed in their houses; (h) high class Brahmans need not bathe after entering their houses, and they eat the food prepared by the Brahmans for the *Srādha* ceremonies in their houses; (i) the caste-men bathe at the touch of the Sudras, and these customs are in vogue among the members of the aristocratic families in Malabar. However, it is said that Samanthans and Ambalavasis do not interdine, but at public feasts they may sit together; nor will Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Nambidis and most of the Ambalavasis take water from them.<sup>1</sup> The chief occupation of the caste-men in Malabar is the personal attendance on the members of the Zamorin and his relations.

Houses of this caste are called *madams*, but those of the aristocracy are known as *kóvilakams*. Some Samanthans have the caste titles of *Karthóvu* and *Kaimal*. The difference between the various classes of Samanthan is almost due to their relative wealth and influence.<sup>2</sup>

Their women wear the special ornaments, *viz.*, *cherutháli*, *entram*, and *kuzhal*.

From the foregoing account of the customs and manners of the Antharálars, it is seen that they come under two distinct communities, in which the wearing of the *pínul* or the sacred thread marks the difference between them. The members of the thread-wearing subdivision were originally Brahmans, but were degraded perhaps for some fault of their ancestors. It is equally possible that their degradation may have been due to the special avocations pursued by them. The Brahmanic customs and manners which they profess to observe are less rigid than in the case of Brahmans, yet they cannot deviate from them. The ceremonial forms of the Brahman marriage are in vogue among them, but the bridegroom or the *tali-tier* is seldom the husband of the girl; and hence the *sambandham* form of marital relations, preferably with Brahmans, and less so with the Kshatriyas, is also allowed.

<sup>1</sup> Cochin Census Report, page 158,

<sup>2</sup> Malabar Gazetteer, page 150.

This alternative form of conjugal relationship is to some extent owing to the difficulty of securing suitable husbands within their own sub-castes, for the men with their small openings prefer *sambandham* union so as to be free from the responsibility of supporting the children ; and this dual form of marital relationship has given rise to a dual form of inheritance.

It is curious to note that, while the population in almost every caste of the State has increased during the ten years from 1891 to 1901, there is a marked diminution among the Nambidis, Adikals, and Pushpakans. The explanation of this may be gathered from the facts that some of their women are married at a comparatively advanced age, and others prefer to remain widows after the death of their husbands.

The members of the other subdivisions, who do not wear the *púnñil*, were probably recruited from the Sudras for temple service, and are below in status to those mentioned above. Of late years, they have been observing the customs and manners of those above them, and are showing considerable signs of elevation in all respects. The social status of each of the subdivisions in the two communities cannot be accurately defined. In the course of my investigations, I found that the members of each subdivision asserted their superiority to those of the others. Each subdivision is in fact an endogamous sect. The Antharálars form in fact a hybrid caste, and ethnologically, the thread-wearing members of the first community are more Aryan than the members of the second.

The following Sanskrit and Malayalam works are consulted in the preparation of my notes on the Antharálajátis :—

(1) Keralamahátmyam, (2) Keralavisheshamahátmyam, (3) Keralólpathi by Dr. Gundert, (4) Keralólpathi republished from Vinódamálíka, (5) Articles in Rasika Ranjini, Mangalodayam, Keralapathrika and Manórama, (6) Occasional notes in the Madras Daiíies and (7) Keralavilasam by the present Erálpád Raja. It may not be out of place here to make a few remarks on the most popular work called also Bhugóla Puranam which deals with the Malayali castes of Kerala. This Sanskrit work of 104 chapters is in poetry in the *Anushtup* metre, and is said to have been narrated by the sage Garga to Yudhishtira. Though the Malayalis consider it as a sacred work, it is but a poor production believed, at most, to be not more than two hundred



---

years old. The style is slipshod and contains many anachronisms. A Malayalam translation has recently been published in Travancore. Mr. Fawcett has roughly handled this work in the Madras Museum Bulletin on the Nambūthiris. There is also another work of the same name in the Palghat Taluk, dealing with pagodas, and four alone of the numerous castes. There is yet another work (not printed) attributed to the famous Vilwamangalathu Swamiyar. The last two are pseudonymous publications.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE KSHATRIYAS.

The caste of Malayali Kshatriyas in Cochin comprises only a few families, some of which are subdivided into smaller branches and are closely related to one another. Among them are included the members of the family of His Highness the Raja, the members of the family of the Chief of Cranganur and others called Thambans and Thirumulpads. The principal Thamban families are related to the ruling families, and are superior in social status to those of the Thirumulpads. The princes of the first two families possess the title of Thamburan and the princesses that of Thamburattis. The women of the Thirumulpads are known as Nambashtathiris. These are mere distinct names borne by the members of the caste.

The caste may be described according to the *Sastras*, as a *Sankara* or hybrid caste originating from the sexual connection of the Brahmins with Kshatriya women. Hence it is also known by another name 'Murdhasikthaka.

The *Sāstras* deny *gōtra* (descent from the Vedic Rishis) to the Kshatriyas who are, it is ordained, to adopt that of their *purōhita*s (family priests). According to this doctrine, all the Kshatriyas belong to the same *gōtra* (*Viśwāmitra gōtra*) and therefore regular or *Sāstraic* inter-marriage is prohibited among them. The Rajas of Kottayam are followers of *Bhrigu-Viśwāmitra gōtra*. There is in Travancore one Kshatriya family, which follows the *Bhārgava gōtra*, viz., the family of the titular Raja of Pantalam, and yet *Sāstraic* or regular inter-marriage between this and any other Kshatriya family of *Viśwāmitra gōtra* is not allowed; nor is there any tradition about its prevalence at any time.

The Kshatriya girls are married both before and after puberty. There are two forms of marriage in vogue among them as among the Nayers, one of which is the formal or ceremonial form, and is generally

Marriage customs.

called the *táli*-tying ceremony (*Tálikettu Kalyanam*, or *Trittali Chárthu* or *Veli* in royal families), and the other, which is the real form of conjugal relationship, is known as *sambandham* (a union terminable at the will of either party). The ceremony for the former, as among the Brahmans, is performed in accordance with the *Grihya Sûtras*, when a girl is between ten and thirteen years of age, and this is immediately followed by the nuptials (*Vivâhasésa*). The bridegroom for this is chosen only from two classes of Brahmans, *viz.*, the Nambuthiris and the Arya Pattars; but in the royal family of Cochin, and in others related to it, only the former is allowed. The bridegroom receives a fee (*varadakshina*) for his services and is allowed to depart after four days, during which various ceremonies are performed and formalities gone through. The same Brahman can act as a pseudo-bridegroom for other girls in the same family or in other families, but can tie the *táli* for only one girl at a time.

In this connection it must be said that marriage is performed according to the *charana* of the tribe, and no regard is paid to the *gôtra*, *sûtra* (precept), or *charana* of the bridegroom elect, nor are their horoscopes consulted prior to the ceremony. The marriage is concluded on the fourth day, but *Oupâsana* (worship of domestic fire) and *Vaiswadéva* (worship of certain gods) are to be continued until the formal nuptials are over, which may be on the same (fourth) night or afterwards.

The *tali*-tying is not the real marriage, *i. e.*, the beginning of the girl's true conjugal relationship. It is, at the most, a licensing ceremony, that is to say, it gives her a title or certificate of fitness to contract conjugal partnership. It is therefore a ceremony that must necessarily be gone through before her real marriage or *sambandham* with a partner chosen from one of the four classes of Brahmans, namely, Nambuthiris, Arya Pattars, Pattars or east coast Brahmans, or the Brahmans of Canara or from her own caste people not related by *pula* or pollution. In the Kshatriya houses of noble ancestry, none but the Nambuthiri Brahmans are allowed to contract *sambandham* marriage with the ladies.

The real marriage or *sambandham* is attended with few or no formalities worth mentioning, and whatever formalities there are, are not absolutely essential. Far from being a public ceremony at which all the members of the household, irrespective of sex, attend, it

*Sambandham.*

is a union formed secretly in the calm silence of the night in the maiden's bed-chamber. The only witnesses to the marriage are the senior female members of the family, together with their real husbands, and perhaps a few intimate friends to certify to the marriage and to congratulate them. Though the opinion of the head of the house (*kāranavan*) and other leading members is ascertained and their approval obtained before it is settled, none of these or any other male member of the house witnesses it, nor do they take open notice of it. Thus, the *sambandham* arrangements are a woman's affair carefully watched and controlled by the male members, who are responsible for the proper management of the *taravad* (family) and the guarding of its prestige and traditions and who treat these *sambandham* arrangements as open family secrets. Yet the husbands of the women and the wives and children of the male members are accorded preferential treatment in the house.

The *sambandham* union is, as has been said above, attended with no religious ceremonies and with no legal formalities. Hence, it is free from those two liabilities, and is terminable at the will of either party. Adultery on the part of the women generally results in divorce, but is an offence that can be atoned for or condoned. Divorce and union with another suitable partner, and reconciliation and re-union with the same are not uncommon. One woman having two real husbands at a time, recognised by the family, is very rare indeed; and it is equally rare to find a man with more than one wife at a time. These are, of course, vestiges of polyandry and polygamy, and the general movement everywhere is towards making *sambandham* more binding on the parties contracting and towards attaching to it all the rights and liabilities of a true marriage.

Thus, the woman has two forms of marriage, namely, one formal or ceremonial; *i. e.*, the tali-tying, and the other real; and, as a general rule, has two husbands likewise, one nominal or conventional and the other real; but this does not necessarily always follow, for the same man may be chosen for both the marriages. The sacred book only recognises the nominal as her husband, though the couple, as a rule, do not really cohabit together even once after the ceremony is over; and conjugal fidelity not being so strictly enforced, as in the case of the Brahman caste, she is allowed to consort with

others who are not inferior to her in caste. Thus, on the death of her nominal husband, she and her sons (born, of course, of her union with real husbands) have to observe pollution, offer funeral oblations and cakes, and perform *Sṛādhās* on anniversary days as to a legal husband and father.

The males too, like the girls, may be said to have two marriages—formal and real—with this important difference, namely, that unlike the tali-tying in girls, no such preliminary marriage is obligatory in the case of males and that it occurs only if he is invited or chosen as a bridegroom (*manavāḍan*) to perform the *tālikettu* (or the formal marriage ceremony) in a Nayar and Sāmantha house. He can tie the *tāli* or marriage badge round the necks of more than one girl on each occasion; and the ceremony in itself is not the vedic one prescribed in the *Grihya Sūtras*. Their real marriage is *sambandham* or free union on *Anulōma* principle, that is, with their caste-women (not related by *pula*) or women of certain inferior castes not below Nayars, namely, Nambidis, Sāmanthans, Ambalavāsis, or Nayars. This is performed neither generally nor necessarily, but more often independently and secretly without the knowledge of his *taravād* members.

There is no hard and fast line defining the extent to which a woman derives support from her husband or the extent to which a member of the other sex is bound to contribute towards the expenses of his wife and children. This matter is more or less governed by considerations of tradition and circumstances in the house of the woman.

Before passing on to the subject of inheritance, a word or two may be said about the social intercourse between the male and female sections of the Kshatriya houses of common ancestry connected by *pula* relationship. This is more or less restricted by certain rules, the object of which appears to be to prevent incest. Love affairs are, as a whole, a topic which they always avoid in conversation. Interviews between a grown-up male member of a household and a female member junior to him (e. g., younger sister, cousin, or niece) are less frequent and free than those between him and one of his senior lady relatives. However, on festive occasions, both sexes gather and take their meals together in a common mess-room.

In the matter of inheritance, the method of reckoning kinship is an important factor. If it is reckoned through the female line, the descent is matrilineal. This condition prevails in the Kshatriya families,

Inheritance.

each of which is, therefore, a matriarchate group of persons, of whom the eldest male member, called the *kāranavan*, manages the household according to the customary law of *marumakkathāyam*.<sup>1</sup> The typical household may be conceived as consisting of a *kāranavan*, his mother, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters born to the latter, and children born to their daughters, and so on.

If, as the family increases, it becomes unwieldy and difficult to manage, then, with the consent of all parties, divisions take place into several collateral branches, each of which establishes itself as a separate matriarchate household. This division affects only the property and not the relation of the *pūla*, that is to say, it does not affect birth and death pollutions which is the sure sign of a common ancestry. The conventional as well as the real husbands of the women of the above described household may be each a follower of the Hindu law; yet she and her children born of the union with the latter have no claim to the property nor a recognised place in the family of either.

Of these, there are two classes, namely, (1) those that are Domestic ceremonies. *Sastraic* including the *samskāras* or sacraments, which are the post-natal and other ceremonies, and (2) others that have nothing but local usages or customs and family traditions to regulate them. The former are performed according to the *Aswalāyana* school of *Grihya Sūtras*, and it is therefore enough to note only their special features when performed in the Kshatriya houses. The latter, though not peculiar to this caste, seem to deserve a more detailed reference, as these may probably throw more light on the earlier state, not only of the Kshatriyas but also of other castes of Malabar.

The ceremonies of *Pumsavana* (male production) and Ante-natal ceremonies. *Seemantha* (hair parting) are performed in the third and fourth months respectively during the period of pregnancy.

On the twelfth day after the birth of a child (for the birth Post-natal ceremonies. pollution lasts for eleven days), the *Jāthakarma* (birth ceremony) is performed, and a secret name is given to the baby.

---

1. Right of sister's sons to inherit as contrasted with *makkathayam*, right of sons to inherit.

Next comes the *Nāmakarana* or name-giving ceremony. The names of males end in the suffix 'Varma' and those of females end in 'Dévi'. The names in common use among the male members of the caste are, Rama Varma, Ravi Varma, Kerala Varma, and Goda Varma; while those among the females are Amba Dévi, Ambika Dévi, Ambalika Dévi, and Subhadra Dévi.

There are also pet names or names used in conversing among themselves or for every day purposes. The names of the males that are in vogue are Kochuuni, Kunjunni, Kochanujan, Kunjikidāvu, Kunjan, Kómar, and those of the females, Kavuvu, Ikkavuvu, Kunjipilla, Manku, Ikku, and Kunji. It must be mentioned here that in ceremonies performed for women, *Nāndeemukha* is not attended with the recitation of any specific formula, but only with that common to all 'gifts', namely, "*Om Tat Sat*".

Next come generally together on the same day, in the sixth month or afterwards, the ceremonies of first taking the child out through a door of the house, *Nishkramaṇa*, and the first rice meal, *Anna prasāna*.

For the third year are ordained the two ceremonies, (1) perforation of the ears (*Karnavédha*), and (2) initiation in reading and writing (*Vidyārambha*), but the latter generally takes place in the fifth year and the former still later—in the ninth year. The ears are pierced with the thorn of a tree called in Malayalam *vaiyankathavu* or *valankathuku* (*Hacourtia Sapida*). The girls have their ear-lobes much more distended than boys, and to distend lobes and to maintain them distended and also perhaps for use as ear-ornaments, they wear, besides other things, circular wooden discs. Of these, one variety, discoid in form, with two sides slightly convex, seems to be similar in shape to the Masai ear-rings of stone, described and illustrated in "Man, February 1905."

Tonsure of the head (*Choula*) is performed in the fifth or a little later in the case of girls, but in the case of boys it takes place along with, but always before, *Upanayanam* (the ceremony of investiture with the holy thread), called on that account "*Saha Choula*". This is performed in the sixteenth year including the period of conception. *Gāyatri*, which cannot be recited by the Kshatriyas for more than ten times on each occasion, and other vedic hymns necessary for the performance of daily oblations are taught, and not the Védas as a

whole. The *Samhita* portion of the Rig Veda only is to be recited by the ordained teacher in the hearing of the initiated youths of the royal family of Cochin during their period of studentship. The rights or observances of *Upākarma*, *Vratas* (austerities) and *Gódana* are entirely omitted.

The period of *Brahmacharya* (studentship) is not a long one but is made as short as possible, and its concluding ceremony '*Samāvartana*' is performed on any auspicious day after the fourth day from the date of *Upanayanam*. Its noteworthy feature is that the youth at its conclusion kneels down (*Abhivádya*) before the officiating family priests and before each male and female member of the house senior to himself, in the order of precedence; and from the *káranavan* he receives a sword, the occupation of the caste being military service. But now no special occupation is reserved for this caste, the members of which therefore seek livelihood in Government service, law, medicine, farming, etc.

Cremation is the ordinary process by which the corpse is disposed of, while infants that die before the date prescribed for the name-giving ceremony are buried (*Bhúmi-dānam*). A concise but different form of cremation (*Ekúrcha-samskára*) is ordained for boys and girls who die before attaining the ages of seven and eleven respectively. If the dead body cannot be procured or safely approached, touched or handled, as in the case of death by contagious diseases, an effigy is made with the leaves of the *Butea frondosa*, and this figure is burned on the pyre with the ritual of cremation. If a pregnant woman dies after 180 days, counted from the fifth day after the last menstruation, a more elaborate form of cremation ceremony is performed, in the course of which, the dead body is operated upon to remove the foetus, to see whether it is alive or dead, and in the latter case it is replaced in the womb and burned along with the mother.

The above mentioned and other funeral ceremonies are performed alike in the Brahman and Kshatriya houses of the *Aswaláyana* school. It is only their special features when performed in the case of the latter that are to be noted here. In Kshatriya houses, certain ceremonies, such as *Ekódishṭa*, *Sapindi*, (*pinda* or rice-ball offerings, to unite the deceased ancestors) and *Nāndeemukha*, are not performed in the elaborate manner as in Brahman households, but in an abridged form for which gifts are made to the Brahmans, for they are



denied to the Kshatriyas. No sacrifices, nor even *Stalee-paka* and *Agráyana*, are performed in their houses. As a variation due to the reckoning of kinship and descent in the female line may be mentioned the order of priority or precedence in the offering of cakes and oblations (*Srāddhas*) on the same day, which is as follows:— Mother, mother's brothers, brothers, mother's sisters, sister's children, mother's mother, sisters, mother's conventional husband, and the Brahman that acts as conventional father, that is, the Acharya who performed the ceremony of investiture of the holy thread. Another authority gives the order as follows:— Mother, brothers, sisters (among whom precedence is given according to seniority by age), mother's brothers, mother's sisters, mother's mother, sister's children, mother's conventional husband, and the Acharya. According to another wording, there is some change in the order given above.

In the case of violent deaths, such as, murder, suicide, deaths from the bites of poisonous animals (snakes, mad dogs) or caused by fangs, tusks or beaks (with certain exceptions) the funeral ceremony is of an entirely different character. It is called *Nárayana bali* (sacrifice addressed to Narayana), and is said to be an expiation ceremony (*Práyaschitham*), prescribed in the *Boudhayana Grihya Sūtra* for the absolution of bliss of the souls that are thus, on a sudden and without previous notice, ousted from their physical dwelling.

To the above-mentioned number of scriptural ceremonies may be added two more, namely, the sacrifice on the birthday for prolongation of life (*Ayushyahóma*) and *Puthari* or what virtually corresponds to *Agráyana* in the Brahman houses, when the rice of the new harvest is cooked, consecrated with hymns recited while touching it and eaten for the first time at an auspicious hour. The scriptural ceremonies, with slight variations, in detail, are common to the castes that wear the sacred thread, while the rites and practices of domestic ceremonies classed as (2) in page 155 are widely observed also in Nayar houses and perhaps in those of castes still lower. Yet mention must be made of one or more of this class which no student of anthropology should fail to notice.

One is, what in the vernacular is called *Anthi-uzhiyuka*. It is undoubtedly a ceremony of exorcism for expelling evil spirits and for the protection of new-born children from them. It is performed in the following manner. The mother sits with the

baby in a room, and an exorciser, generally an elderly woman of the caste, waves round the body of the baby lighted cotton wicks placed on the leaf of the *Mimusops elengi*, in which the demons and spirits are supposed to dwell. Two vessels, one after the other, are also taken, one of which contains a red liquid prepared by mixing lime, saffron powder and water, and the other a black mixture made of charcoal in water. The baby is made to touch each vessel, when the vessels with the lighted wicks are waved round as before. The mother presses milk out of her breast into each vessel, and the respective leaves and wicks are put into it. The bowls are then removed outside the house and the contents poured out. This ceremony is performed at twilight every day till the first birthday is over. This is supposed to remove the potency of the evil-eye. On Tuesdays and Fridays—days specially sacred to the patron deities (good and evil spirits) of magic and exorcism—it is performed in a more elaborate manner. Three morsels of cooked rice, two of which are coloured red and black respectively, with the same materials as are used in colouring the two liquids, and a few more wicks and leaves are added to the articles to be waved round the child. From this it would appear that by this process an artificial baby is made, the morsels representing the solid tissues, the two liquids, the red and black, the varieties of blood in the body of the child. The infant being nourished on its mother's milk, this also is added to give finish to the artificial production. The genesis of this practice is traced back to the horrible episode recorded in the Puranas, of the demon Púthana's mission to poison and murder Krishna during his infancy, and his miraculous self-rescue by killing her while suckling the breasts offered to him.

The above is a simple form of ceremony of exorcism adapted for daily practice. Professional magicians are however called in to perform more elaborate ones to check the inroads of the demons or to counteract their evil influences and to expel them altogether.

No messenger goes alone and unarmed; two must be despatched, armed with iron weapons to fetch the barber woman who acts as midwife at a delivery. Such a woman met on the way should be rejected—a precaution taken because of a tragic occurrence which once happened according to tradition. It is said that a person who appeared professing to be a barber woman, and who was ushered into the apartment of delivery,

proved to be a female demon who ate up both the mother and the infant. An iron weapon or even a piece of metal is considered to be a safe-guard against demoniacal attack and is always carried by women during menses and by both the sexes during the pollution period after the death of any near relation—a practice engendered by the belief that the period of pollution is favourable to possession by demons. The demons are said to be afraid of, and scrupulously avoid, light, and light is therefore considered a safe-guard against their evil influences. A lamp is kept always burning both day and night in the chamber of confinement. This, combined with its mesmeric effects, will perhaps account for the illumination so necessary in the ceremonies of exorcism. These practices are common to all Hindu castes in Kerala. With the same object a cadjan *grandha*—a treatise forming or containing the particular portion of *Mārkaṇḍeya Puranam*, called *Dēvi Mahātmyam*, or extracts of the more important portions therefrom—is always kept under the pillows of the baby.

Thus, it will be seen that the earliest and the most indispensable elements of civilization—iron and fire—are considered as the natural safe-guards against demoniacal attacks to which persons are more liable during the period of pollution and childhood; and with the advance of civilisation these demons and evil spirits seem to vanish. It may be that some of the stories about evil spirits are based upon the memory of outrages and acts of violence perpetrated in early times by aboriginal people of the lowest type. On the stage where the mythical stories are acted, the female demons such as *Pūthana*, *Simhika* and *Sūrpanakha* are represented in black dress with feather crowns, while the paintings and artificial tattoo marks on the face are very similar to the figures seen in the illustrations of American Indians, etc., in books on anthropology and allied sciences.

The Kshatriyas, as other high caste-men, are very particular in observing the birthday ceremonies. Every mother considers it her sacred duty to serve her sons and daughters with meals on their birthdays. She stands behind her son or daughter who is seated before a burning lamp with other auspicious articles placed near it; and after the meals have been served first for the elephant God and afterwards for her child, the mother, praying for the long life, welfare and happiness of her child, passes round and round thrice over its head, a goblet

with a spout containing pure water together with certain herbs, raw rice, and grain. All these ingredients, except the first, are thrown upon the child's head at the conclusion of the ceremony, which, in the local vernacular, is called *Vayar-ozhiyuka*. Both the child and the mother must, on that day, subject themselves before the meal to the ceremonious toilette referred to below.

The essential articles of toilette are sandal-wood paste, a black fluid preparation called *chand* (eye salve) and a bouquet of flowers (*desa pushpam*). Some of these are omitted on certain occasions, while other articles are added to the list on others; e. g., turmeric, the juice of the plant called *mukkootti* in Malayalam, and even the whole plant itself. The creeper called *vayara* (meadow-grass) is also used for the birthday toilette.

The ceremony, called *Kottumchiri*, consists of clapping the hands and laughing while dancing around a bowl full of the same red liquid with the burning wicks on the side of it, as in the ceremony of *Anthi-uzhiyuka* (exorcism), and at the end of the dance it is turned upside down, thus putting out all the lights. This is a thanks-giving service—an offering made in fulfilment of a vow—to the goddess by whose favour a lost thing is recovered. Only children take part in this.

In this connection, mention should be made of the purificatory ceremonies. A girl after her first menses, a woman after her delivery, and the agnates of a deceased member in a family, are freed from pollution by a plunge bath, wearing a garment (*mattu*) washed by a Velan, coupled with the priest's sprinkling a little water sanctified by the recital of holy *mantrams* (*punyāham*). Mere plunge-bath is enough for ordinary purification, and this is scriptural in the case of thread-wearing males. There is, however, an exception. The Kshatriyas are polluted by the touch of the Nayers, but the services of their *adiyan* domestic Nayar servants are a matter of necessity in several of the domestic ceremonies. A maid servant has to do duties in the purificatory baths after the menses and delivery. It is she who has to watch by the bed of, and to wait on, the lady and her baby during the first ten or eleven days after confinement, during which her touch is said not to pollute the former. When the attached house servants are disabled by pollution from doing their duties, the servants of the family priests are generally called in to perform them.

The ceremonies and observances described respectively under the two classes, with few exceptions, are not addressed to any particular god. Those performed for the worship of tutelary deities at home, for the deities in temples, and in the serpent grove, pilgrimage to holy places, worship of sacred animals, plants, streams, and the seas, etc., with fastings on *Ekádési* (the eleventh day after full or new moon), *Sravana Dwádesi*, *Pradósham*, *Ashtami-rohini* (a holiday in August-September to commemorate the birth of Sri Krishna), *Nava rúthri* (Desara), and festivals such as *Onam*, *Vishu*, *Thiruváthira*, and *Nira* (all peculiar to Malabar) and various rites of magic and exorcism together constitute the medley of religious observances of these people. Their religion may, therefore, be described as Hinduism largely mixed up with animism. An early bath followed by an elaborate and ceremonious toilette on every day during the months of Karkadakam (July-August) and Thulám (October-November), on the day of *Thiruváthira* festival in the month of Dhanu (December-January), and the morning sacrifices offered by the maidens to the Elephant God (Ganesa) in the months of Thulam and Meenam (March-April) on days respectively presided over by *Thiruvónam* (the twenty-second asterism, Aquila) and *Púram*, (the eleventh asterism of the lump of Leo), must also be added to those mentioned above. If the first menstruation takes place before the scriptural marriage, as is sometimes the case, a similar sacrifice is offered to the same deity every day during the intervening period. The sacrifice may, therefore, be regarded as a prayer for the removal of all obstacles to the marriage. The rites and observances of the Mádhva sect have found their way into the royal family of Cochin.

There are two modes of dressing, *viz.*, (1) the older, with one garment *wastram* or *pudava* exhibiting foldings and a knot-like projection in front and adopted on ceremonial occasions, and (2) the modern, with two pieces, one as an under-garment (which for females is seven or eight cubits long) and the other around it. The males wear a longitudinal strip of cloth stitched on a cotton tape tied round the waist, and an outer garment (*mundu*) which is an ordinary loin cloth. The females cover their breasts with a small piece of cloth when they go out.

Malabar ladies have a peculiar way of dressing their hair; the coil of the younger ladies rises like a tapering column on

the head, while that of their elders is almost circular in form lying on the left side over the forehead. No decoration is used for the hair, save flowers; nor do the Kshatriya ladies wear nose-rings. They wear ear-rings, the one in common use being *thóda* made of gold and in shape similar to the circular wooden blocks which the girls use for distending their ear lobes. The old and antiquated ear-rings, which it has superseded and which are worn only on ceremonial occasions, are the two forms of *káthila*, *mani-káthila* consisting of golden beads, and *púttu-káthila* shaped like a horse-shoe in outline and consisting of two halves nailed together, while the outside presents a view of closely set golden knobs of different sizes systematically arranged. One of these two ear-rings, a waist ornament (*aranhán*) and anklets are the ornaments worn during the tali-tying ceremony and the puberty or first menstruation ceremony but not afterwards. In brief, what has been said about dress is also true with regard to ornaments; there is one set of ornaments for ceremonies, and another for use or show.

The caste is exclusively vegetarian, and meat and intoxicating drinks are strictly forbidden and scrupulously avoided on pain of loss of caste. Diet. They drink milk boiled by Súdras (Nayars) who may also supply butter-milk, ghee, and *pappadam* (thin cakes made of kidney beans) for feasts. In their houses, and even on occasions of public feasts, the Brahmans are served with meals prepared by these Kshatriyas. The two classes can sit in the same row and take their meals together at the same time, but not from the same plantain leaf or plate. But the lads, lasses, and ladies of the Nambuthiris are not served with meals prepared by Kshatriyas, who, however, can supply them with food prepared without water.

Of these, only one need be described here. It is called *Sangha-kali* or *Sastra-kali*, a comic performance by a theatrical company of Brahmans and Kshatriyas. The date of its origin is unknown; but tradition ascribes the representation of the Brahmanical army and organisation of eighteen such companies in *Kerala* in ancient times of Parasurama and one more afterwards to Kodasseri Kartha, whose descendants still live in Chalakudi. The following is its traditional origin. "In its import it seems to combine the propitiation of Siya and Parvati in the manner indicated by a tradition at Trikkarayur with exorcism and skill in swordsmanship. It is of course generally believed that in

Games.

ancient days the Brahmins themselves ruled Kerala. When they found it necessary to have a separate king, one *Attakat Nambuthiri* was deputed with a few other Brahmins to go and obtain a ruler from the adjoining *Chera* territory. The only pass in these days that connected Malabar with Coimbatore was what is to-day known as *Nerumangalam*. When the Nambuthiris were returning through this pass with the ruler they have secured from the *Chera* King, a strange light was observed on the adjacent hills. Two young Brahmins of the Chengamanát village, one proceeding towards the hill to investigate the source, found to their amazement that it was none other than *Sri Bhagavati*, the consort of *Siva*, who enjoined them to go to *Kodungallur*, the capital of the *Perumals*, *via* *Trikkarayur*. Seeing that the sight of *Bhagavati* foretold prosperity, the king called that range of hills *Nerumangalam*, or "true bliss", and made an endowment of all the surrounding land to the Brahman village of *Chengamanát* whose members had the good fortune to see the Goddess *vis-à-vis*. When they entered the temple of *Trikkarayur*, an unseen voice was heard to exclaim "*Chera Perumal*" which meant that, in that town, where *Parasurama* was believed to be dwelling, no *Perumal* (king) should ever enter—a traditional injunction still represented by the *Malabar Kshatriyas*. At this place the sixth *Perumal* who, according to tradition, had a pronounced predilection for the *Bouddha* religion (*Islamism* or *Buddhism*, we cannot say), called a meeting of the Brahmins and told them that religious discussion should be held between them and the *Bouddhas*, in view to decide their relative superiority. The presiding deity of the local *Saiva* shrine was then propitiated by the Brahmins to enable them to come out victorious from that trial. A *Gangama* saint appeared before them and taught them a hymn called *Nalupádam* (four feet or parts of a *śloka*) which the Nambuthiris say is extracted from the *Sáma-veda*. The saint further advised them to take out a lamp from within the temple which tradition ascribes to have existed from the time of *Mándhátá*, a distant progenitor of *Sri Rama* to a room built on the western ghat of the temple tank and pray to *Siva* in terms of the hymn. While this was continued for forty-one days, six Brahmins, with *Mayura Bhatta* at their head, arrived from the East Coast to the succour of the Nambuthiris. With the help of these Brahmins, the Nambuthiris kept up a

protracted discussion with the Bouddhas. Wishing to bring it to a close, the Perumal thought of applying a practical test. He enclosed a snake within a pot and asked the disputants to declare its contents. The Bouddhas came first with the correct statement, while the Brahmans followed by saying that it is a lotus flower. The Perumal was, of course, pleased with the Bouddhas, but when the pot was opened, it turned out to be different from what was put in. It was a lotus flower. The Bouddhas then felt defeated, and ever afterwards the sacred hymn called *Nalupadam* has been sung by the Nambuthiris in view to secure a variety of objects, every one of which they expect to attain by this means. It is also said that, when the Brahmans were propitiating Siva at Trikkarayur as already stated, diverse spirits and angels were found amusing Párvati with their quips and cranks. A voice from heaven was then heard to say that such frolics must form thereafter part of the worship of Siva."<sup>1</sup>

It is a socio-religious performance in the royal families, and those of local chiefs of the higher castes in Malabar, Cochin and Travancore, which patronise one or more of these companies; and each of these again has, in one or more temples, its patron deities whose aid they invoke during the performance. Each company has its office-bearers, a *Vákyavrihi* and a *Parisha*. The former who is the real manager of the company is a Nambuthiri of the vedic class, and the latter is his assistant and is in charge of the dress and other articles for the performance.<sup>2</sup>

This company of actors whose number varies according to the chances of remuneration receive formal invitation for their performance in the families of those above mentioned, on such occasions as marriage, the first anniversary of the death of a deceased father, mother, or the head of the family, the feeding ceremony (*Chóroonu*) of a child, and the ceremony of investiture of the holy thread (*Upanayanam*).

The programme of the performance is as follows. The first of them is *Kanamirikkuka*. The party attends the ceremony during the day. There is a formal announcement by the beating of the drum (*Keli-kottu*) at the feast. In the evening,

1. Travancore Census Report, pages 315-316.

2. This was formerly a pure, political, and military function. The duty of the Nambuthiri is to give advice according to Sastras, and it is the duty of the Kshatriyas to act up to it.



generally after 4 o' clock, the party sitting round a copper caldron sing merry songs and accompanying themselves by beating on the caldron with their hands. In the midst of this, one of them rises, takes a spoon (a cocoanut shell provided with a bamboo handle) and mimics the part of a *Velichapad*. After this they bathe and return for another performance which is called *Nálupúdam*. This is a dance by four men around a burning lamp during the recitation of some formula which is said to convey some high ideals and eternal principles of religion. They are next treated to a sumptuous supper, during which each in turn recites verses known as *kari-slókams*, which describe in detail how the curries of the feast are cooked and served. The singer calls for any preparation he likes, though he is not meant to be served. A long leaf, with all the preparations, is placed in front of the burning lamp in honour of Ganapati, who is believed to remove all obstacles. After supper, they organise a torch light procession, singing boat-songs, and return to the *kalam*, or hall in the house, and soon after, the whole party, with the sacred thread hanging vertically round their necks (*upaviti*), sit around the burning lamp (near which are placed a vessel of rice, cocoanuts, plantains and flowers) to sing songs in praise of Siva, the Lord of Trikárayur, and perform a comic or humorous performance in which mimicry plays an important part. Then they all stand up and dance singing songs, keeping time with their feet as they move along.

The exorcising, by the waving of a lighted torch before the face of the host, of any evil spirits that may have attached themselves, is then gone through, and one of the performances ends with a prayer to Bhagavati to shower on him every prosperity.

At its finis and together with the guests invited to the ceremony, the host offers salutations with the fee for the performance. There is, after this, another performance called *Pánakali*; for which two vessels, one bigger than the other, filled with paddy and rice, and a cocoanut are placed in front of a burning lamp near which a few of them sing songs in honour of Ganapati. Then follows the performance by certain actors of feats with swords and shields which prolong till day-break if more presents are expected. The performance is dull and uninteresting, and few people, whose real home is not

Malabar, will be able to appreciate and enjoy the play. A great Brahman Pandit, in the employ of the Zamorin of the day, when asked about the merits of the performance, is reported to have said, "It is a mental aberration of the people of Malabar."

Nevertheless, this old institution is still very popular in Cochin, Malabar and Travancore, and is not likely to disappear in the reforming age of modern India.

In temples the Kshatriyas can approach for worship up to the very threshold of the shrine in which the deity is placed. The entry is however forbidden in certain temples which tradition attributes, in some cases, to the consecration ceremony having been performed by Parasurama, the enemy of the Kshatriyas. The touch of the Kshatriya defiles the Brahman, who is thereby debarred from taking part in any special and optional ceremonies, but not from taking meals or performing the ordinary and special oblations during the morning, midday, and evening services (*sandhya-vandanam*). There are, however, some strictly orthodox Brahmans, very few in number, who will neither perform any ceremony nor eat nor drink while polluted by the touch of a Kshatriya. There is one Kshatriya house at Chalakudi, called Thirupad, now branched off into several, which calls for special notice. It is a Kshatriya house, but degraded, its fall being attributed by tradition to its having accepted, in days of yore, the services of a Telugu Brahman (instead of a Malayali or Nambuthiri Brahman) as the priest to conduct the domestic ceremonies. These are now performed under the supervision of Nambuthiris, whose spiritual supremacy is now acknowledged in full.

From what has been said above, it will be seen that the Kshatriya community is an intermediate caste between the Brahmans (Nambuthiris) and the Sudras (Nayars) and has affinities to both; to the former, in matters of ablution ceremonies, and of food and drink, and to the latter in those of matrimonial relationship and inheritance, the constitution and propagation of the family. It is an historical fact that when two people or races come into close contact with each other and live side by side as members of a body politic, each in course of time adapts itself and assimilates something of the manners and customs of the other,

Thus, the Nambuthiri class (Aryans) has become Dravidianised and Dravidian Nayar population has become Aryanised though in a lesser degree. The intermediate caste therefore must be the Aryans more Dravidianised or the Dravidians more Aryanised, *i. e.*, the Aryans degraded or the Dravidians more elevated, more probably the latter, or it may be a mistake to suppose that racial unity or uniformity exists among the members of a caste, as it is now constituted, and an expert observer may, therefore, detect several racial types among them. Dr. John Beddoe says that the Kshatriyas of Cochin are evidently Aryans.

---

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE BRAHMANS.

The caste that occupies the highest position in the order of social precedence is that of the Brah-  
mans.<sup>1</sup> They are called *Dwiji's* (twice born), *Bhūdevans* (lords of the earth) and are also addressed by other similar complimentary names. They are generally classed under ten main divisions which are included in two equal groups. These groups are called *Panchagaudās*<sup>2</sup> and *Panchadravidās*,<sup>3</sup> the former being the Brahmans living north, and the latter south, of the Vindhya Range. The Brahmans of the latter group claim superiority over those of the former owing to their better religious observances and complete abstinence from animal food.

1. 'Brahmans' is a contraction of 'Brahmana', which means one who has realised the 'Brahmam-Para-Brahmam', that something of which the universe is a manifestation according to Hindu philosophy. (Travancore Manual, page 247).

Brahmans are said to have sprung from the face of Brahman or *Vīraśvarūpam* of God. The term 'Brahmans' originally denoted devout worshippers and contemplative sages or poets who composed hymns in praise of the gods. But when the ceremonial worship became highly developed and complicated, and the sacred functions became quite distinct from other functions, the epithet gradually came to be employed for a minister of religion and eventually came to signify one particular class of priests with special functions. Then the hierarchy of the Brahmans were completely organised: and that possibly took place towards the close of the vedic period. (A Peep into the Vedic Age, pages 102-103, by Ramachandra Gosha).

2. Panchagaudas are the Saraswaths, Kanyakubja, Gandara, Utkala and Mithila Brahmans. (Hindu Castes and Sects, by Jogendra Nath Bhattacharya).

3. Panchadravidas are the Maharashtra, Telugu, Canarese, Tamil and Malayalam Brahmans.

### THE NAMBUTHIRIS.

Among the Drávida Brahmans are classed the Nambuthiris, known also as Kerala or Malayála Brahmans, who are even now, as they have always been, a dominant and priestly class of people in Malabar, Cochin, and Travancore. They are the vedic Brahmans of the purest Aryan type leading a high spiritual life in their homes and maintaining an ideal of a high order of religious seclusion or rather keeping aloof from 'the busy world's ignoble strife'. They are also the aristocracy of the land, marked most conspicuously by two characteristics, simplicity and exclusiveness. In ancient times they devoted themselves to the practice of religious austerities and seldom cared to engage in schemes of aggrandizement or worldly ambition. This manner of life did not last long: for they became the confidential advisers of kings, and all judicial authority, vested in royalty, was entrusted to them. Thus, in course of time, they became the expounders of law—both human and divine—and for this they were liberally rewarded by the rulers, while every religious ceremony implied feeding them and giving them handsome presents.

The word 'Nambuthiri' is derived from *nambuka* (to trust), and *thiri* (an honorific suffix meaning sacred, as in *Akkitiri*, *Somatiri*, and *Samutiri*). The name, according to this derivation, indicates the position they held as the confidential advisers and trusted friends of the Rajas and chiefs. There is another derivation of the word from *nam* (knowledge), and *purikka* (to impart), and this alludes to the great vedic learning which they, as a class, possess, and which alone in their opinion constitutes true knowledge.<sup>1</sup> According to Sir William Hunter, they are Brahmanised fishermen.<sup>2</sup> This statement is nothing more than an outrageous insult to the whole community, and the customs above referred to, which will be described later on, do not in the least suggest or justify such a remark. The results of the anthropometric measurements of Mr. Fawcett lead him to believe that the Nambuthiris are the truest Aryans in Southern India.

According to the two popular works, *Kerala Máhātmyam* and *Keralólpathi*, the Nambuthiris were the descendants of the Brahmans who were

Traditions of origin.

1. Travancore Manual, Vol. II page 248.

2. Sir William Hunter's Orissa. Longman's Manual, page 274.

brought to Kerala from all parts of India by the renowned sage and warrior, Sri Parasurāma, who settled them in sixty-four *grāmams* (villages) into which the country was divided for their sake. Their original habitation was *Ahikshétram*, whence they are said to have migrated to *Aryapuram* in the plains south of *Kurukshétra*, and here it was that they were invited to colonise the newly reclaimed territory. They were also made lords of the lands with high privileges and honours: and to make them stay permanently here, certain innovations in their customs and manners are said to have been introduced by Parasurama. These earliest colonists were afterwards joined by others from the banks of the Narbada, the Krishna and the Cauvery.<sup>1</sup>

With regard to the date of their advent and settlement in Kerala, there is no authentic information. The orthodox tradition as given in the popular works, Kerala Māhātmyam and Keralólpathi, would fix it in the *Tréta-Yuga* or the second great Hindu cycle. There is an astrological formula—'*Chitta-Chalanam*'—according to which 1,346 years have passed since the fall of Panniyur *gramam*: this suggests that there were Brahmans in Malabar before that period. The Periplus and the writings of Ptolemy and other early writers testify to the existence of Brahman settlements on the Malabar coast as early as the first century<sup>2</sup>: and this very nearly coincides with the period marked by the astrological formula above given. Recent researches point to an earlier date than was at one time supposed. The Hiragaldi and Pallava grants prove that the Brahmans had settled in South India in the fourth or fifth century A. D.,<sup>3</sup> and in the *Sahyādrī Khāndam*, one Mayūra Varman of the Kadamba dynasty is said to have introduced Brahman colonists from the north and granted them sixty-four villages below the ghats, and the date of this is supposed to be at the close of the fifth century.<sup>4</sup> Their post

1. There are, it is said, many points of similarity between the Nambuthiris and the Telugu Brahmans, viz., in house-name, cast of countenance, frank and outspoken nature, proficient vedic study, situation of houses in gardens, construction of houses, dress of women, absence of musical taste. (Travancore Census Report, 1891, page 654).

2. Travancore Census Report, page 296.

3. Bombay Gazetteer, Vol. I, Part II, page 319. and Epigraphica Indica 1, 8.

4. Epigraphica Indica, VIII<sup>e</sup>—31

puberty, marriage customs, and the absence of any allusion in the Mithákshara to the Sarvaswadanam marriage of these people show; to some extent, that they must have been separated from the main body of the Aryans or Aryo-Dravidians, before this form of adoption became obsolete, *i. e.*, long before the fourth or the fifth century.<sup>1</sup> So conflicting are the statements of antiquarians that it may fairly be assumed, in the absence of still better and more reliable evidence, that the Brahmans were already in Kérala or Parasurama-Kshéthram<sup>2</sup> long before the fourth or the fifth century.

It is said that the Nambuthiris who settled in Kerala in sixty-four villages were divided into two sects, namely, (1) Vaishnavites or the Panniyúr *grámakkhúr* or the inhabitants of Panniyúr village<sup>3</sup> and (2) the Chovour *grámakkar* (villagers of Chovaram or Sivapuram, Siva's village), who readily accepted the Chola, Chera and Pandyan kings who followed the Sivite teachings from Chalukyas. They formed a regular oligarchy with four *Talis* or administrative bodies having their head-quarters at Cranganur. This institution, it is said, did not work well; the people were oppressed by the protectors who sought to make the most of their opportunities during their short term of office. The Brahmans thereupon assembled at Tirunavai and decided to select a king, and their choice fell upon Kiya-Perumal of Kiyapura or the country on the other side of the ghats. He was brought to Kerala and installed as the first of the Perumals in the year of the Kali-Yuga, '*Bhūmanbhūpōyam prāpya*', which corresponds to 216 A. D. It was also resolved that he should rule for 12 years, but he only governed the kingdom for eight years and four months.

There are six subdivisions among the Nambuthiris arranged in the order of social precedence. They are—

Subdivisions of the caste.

1. Malabar Quarterly Review, March 1902, Indian Law Report Madras XI, 180.

2. Parasurama Kshethram is one of the many names given to Malabar in the past, and has its origin in the well-known legend that Malabar or Keralam was reclaimed from the sea by its patron saint, the Brahman warrior Parasurama. This legend is related in most of the Puranas and is the starting point of all traditional accounts of the early history of the country. It is also called Karma-Bhumi or the country where salvation depends upon good actions.

3. Panniyur—*ur* or village, and *panni* or boar. Those who came under the patronage of the Vaishnavites of the Chalukya dynasty with the boar as their royal emblem,

I. *Thampurákkals*.—This term is a corruption of the Sanskrit name 'samrát' or sovereign, which seems to have some reference to temporal and secular authority: In former times there were two illustrious families of *Thamburákkals*, *Kalpancherry* and *Azhuváancherry*, the latter of which alone now remains. As spiritual *sámráts* (sovereigns), they are entitled to : (1) *Bhadrásanam*, the chief seat in an assembly ; (2) *Brahmasámrájjam*, or lordship over Brahmans ; (3) *Brahmavarchas*, or authority in vedic lore ; and (4) *Sarvamányam*, universal respect. The spiritual influence of the members of this family must have been and is still very great in Malabar. Though higher than the other divisions of the Nambuthiris, they form with the *Adhyans* an endogamous sect. There is a popular tradition respecting the acquisition of this title. A Nambuthiri was on his way home after a *Hiranyagarbham* ceremony with a gold cow, a present from the ruling sovereign of Travancore. He was taunted by a Pulayan who said that his caste-men were the claimants of dead cows, and not the illustrious Brahmans ; but that, if he should have it (the gold cow), he should give life to it and make it walk home. The pious Brahman muttered some *mantrams* and sprinkled some water on it when it became alive. The Pulayan saw it and said that he was indeed the great *Thamburákkal*.

II. *Adhyans*.—They form eight families, and there is not a correct tradition to the effect that they are descended from the eight sons of the renowned Brahman sage who lived on the banks of the Krishna. This does not appear to be true as they belong to different *gótras*. They live a retired life and spend their time in studying the Vedas and practising acts of piety, charity, and benevolence, receiving no gifts or *dánams*. They do not perform *yágams* nor become a *Vána-prastha* (dwelling in a forest) or *Sanyási* ; the accumulated spirituality of their ancestors was so great that it is considered to be lasting enough even for their latest descendants. To two families in Malabar Parasurama gave the high privilege of *tantram* or the status of the ruling priests in most of the important temples. The *Adhyans* are generally addressed by the title of 'Nambuthiripad' which is attached to their family names. Their women are distinguished from other Nambuthiri women by their mode of dressing, their caste marks, etc. They are privileged to wear silver bangles, while others can wear only pewter or



bell-metal bangles. The eight families above referred to are membered by the mnemonic *Kalamèmakulu, Chemba muri vella*, and they are—<sup>1</sup>

1. Kalangandhathur Graham (Olappa Mana, Varikka-seri Mana, Ottúr Mana) ;
2. Mezhatol Graham (Koodallur, Kodanád, Kudalát-tupuram Mana) ;
3. Máthur Graham (Puvulli Mana, Máthur Mana) ;
4. Kulukkallur (Oruvuláseri Mana, Porayannúr Mana, Mappád Mana) ;
5. Chemmangat Graham ;
6. Pázhur Graham (Páduthol Mana, Killimangalathu Mana, Pallipurathu Mana) ;
7. Murundothil Graham (Ekádesi Thekkédattu Mana, Ekádesi Vadakkedattu Mana) ;
8. Vellangallur Graham (Akkarakuruchi Mana, Elakuruchi Mana, Vázhapilli Mana).

There are several classes of Adhyans of which the members of the eight families are the most important.

III. *Visishta Nambuthiris*.—These are of two classes, viz., *Agnihóthris* and *Bhattathiris*, and of the former there are three divisions, viz., *Akkithiris*, those who have performed the ceremony of *Agniyádhana* (worship of fire), *Somáthiris*, those who performed the *Sóma* sacrifice, which married men alone are entitled to perform and at which the Nayar is an indispensable factor, and the *Bhattathiris*, the Brahmans who study and explain the sciences and sacred lore of ancient times, namely, Tharka (logic), Vedántha (religious philosophy or theosophy), Mímámsa, Vyákarana (grammar), Bhárata and Prabhákara. The last were, in fact, the religious teachers of Malabar, and always had a large number of disciples about them. Among the last subdivisions are included the *Vádyáns* or the heads of the vedic schools at Trichur in Cochin and Tirunavai in British Malabar, the *Vaidikans*<sup>2</sup> or the expounders of caste rules, and the *Smárthans*<sup>3</sup> or 'socio moral tribunals of Brahmanical Malabar' who investigate into sexual offences and preside at *Smártha Vichárams*.

1. All these have undergone partition. The names of the branches into which they were divided are given within brackets.

2. The six Vaidikans:—Thaikkat, Kaplingat, Pandal, Perumpattappu, Kaimukku and Cherumukku.

3. Smarthans are Pattachomayar, Muttamana, Bhattatiri, Naduvathu Puthuvár, Iruvachi Puthuvár, Vellakkattu Bhattatiri, and Meppalli Nambuthiri.

IV. *Sámanyas*.—They are the ordinary Nambuthiris who study the Vedas, perform religious services in temples and practise *manthra vādams* (magic). Of these, some are *tantris* in temples.

V. *Játimatrás* or *Játimatranmar*.—These include—

(1) *Ashta Vāidyans*,<sup>1</sup> or the eight families of physicians who were directed by Parasurama to devote themselves solely to the study and practice of medicine and surgery. They are also called Nambi and Músu.

(2) *Yatralikkúr* or *Sásthra Nambuthiris*.<sup>2</sup>—These are the Brahmans who are supposed to have accepted the profession of arms from Parasurama and who may on that account be said to be partly Brahman and partly Kshatriya.

(3) *Grámani Nambuthiris*, i. e., those who undertake the duties of protecting the *grámams* or Brahman villages under the orders of their founder, and actually received lands or territory from him. They were also called Brahmani Adhyans, and were at one time the virtual rulers of their possessions.

(4) Brahmans, who, by poverty, chronic disease, laziness or other causes, gave up the vedic study.

The first three classes of the Brahmans above mentioned were obliged to give up their vedic study because of the special duties imposed upon them by Parasurama, but the first study or *mutalmura*, reading the Vedas or hearing them recited once, was gone through. The members of those subdivisions, though looked upon by the rest of the community as somewhat inferior to them, are, nevertheless, allowed to bathe in the same ghat, take meals in their company and to assist in cooking them.

VI. *Sápagrasthas* (receivers of the course).—These are the Nambuthiris who are believed to have questioned the divine nature of Parasurama. They are therefore prohibited from having any caste honours, from studying the Vedas, from associating with the rest of the Nambuthiris and the partaking of the *nivédyam* rice in temples.

1. The eight physician families are, Pulumantol, Kuttanchori, Alattur, Taikkattu, Eletattu, Vellur, Chirattaman and Karantole.

2. It is traditionally alleged that some portion of the Brahmans did at one time arm themselves. The members who did so are said to have been 36,000 and they are known as Ayudhapanis or weapon-bearers. The heads of this class are Nambiyatiris still pointed out as the chief of them. There are probably some foundations for the tradition, but the profession of arms was not a congenial employment for a Brahman under the old regime. Logan's Manual of Malabar, pages 121-122.

*Pápishtanmar*.—The Nambuthiris of this class had by their conduct disqualified themselves for respect or equal rights and privileges with the other Brahmans. To this subdivision belong the *Oorillaparisha-Moossads*, who accepted the gift of land from Parasurama, the Panniyur villagers who scandalised the feelings of other Brahmans by offering an insult to their idoī *Varāhamūrthi*, and the Nambuthiris who murdered the sovereign to please their caste-men, and those who countenanced the murder of Bhútarāya Perumal.

The subdivisions above given are partly based on the vedic, philosophic and other studies, religious merits (coupled with the functions assigned to some Brahmans proficient in them), and partly on the worldly occupations enjoined on others for the well-being of the whole community. There was, originally, no difference in respect of honour paid to Brahmans employed in certain kinds of functions and those employed in others; for all were found to be equally useful and necessary to the commonwealth. But in course of time the power and influence of the educated class began to increase, while that of the rest of the community gradually declined; they became the priestly class and as their influence became supreme in all matters, temporal and spiritual, they looked down upon the uneducated mass as very much their inferior. The whole community of the Nambuthiris may thus broadly be divided into *Othullavar* (vedic) and *Othilláthavar* (non-vedic). The former are privileged to recite and expound the Vedas, and perform the sixteen ceremonials (*Shódasa Kriyás*), while the latter can neither study the Vedas nor superintend the performance of the above ceremonies. The *Játimátras* and *Sápagrasthás* belong to the latter class. Save that, there is no inter-dining between the women of these divisions; in all other respects the observances of the two classes are similar.

The Nambuthiris are fond of mnemonics and by a well-devised one, the privileges in regard to the performance of religious rites and other matters of a purely social nature serve as the basis for the subdivision of the Nambuthiris in the order of social precedence, as recognised among themselves. For this purpose, the privileges may be grouped under two main divisions given in the following mnemonic formula:—

1. *Edu* (the leaf of a *çadjan grandha* or book): the right of studying and teaching the Vedas or *Sástras*.

2. *Adu* (sheep): the right of performing holy sacrifices.
3. *Picha* (mendicancy symbolic of family priests): the right of officiating as family priests.
4. *Bhiksha* (receiving alms): the right of becoming a *Sanyasi*.
5. *Othu* (Vedas): the right of studying the Vedas.
6. *Sánthi* (officiating as temple priests): the right of performing priestly functions in temples.
7. *Adukkala* (kitchen): the right of cooking for all classes of Brahmans.
8. *Arangu* (stage): the right of taking part in the performance of *Sástrangam* Nambuthiris.
9. *Kadavu* (bathing place or ghát): the right of bathing in the same bathing place with other Brahmans, or the right of touching after bathing, without thereby disqualifying the person touched for performing religious services.
10. *Panthi* (row of eaters): the right of messing in the same row with other Brahmans.

Those who enjoy privilege No. 1 are entitled to all the remaining privileges. Those who enjoy No. 2 have all the privileges from No. 2 downwards, but not No. 1, those having No. 3 have similarly all the privileges from No. 3 downwards, but not Nos. 1 and 2, and so on.<sup>1</sup>

The Nambuthiris, as has been already said, were originally settled in *grámams* or villages of which there were thirty-two, most of which have now disappeared. The chief among those which are still in existence are:—

- |                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Habitation.                       | settled in <i>grámams</i> or villages of which there were thirty-two, most of which have now disappeared. The chief among those which are still in existence are:— |
| 1. Sukapuram or Sivapuram,        | 6. Karikkad.   |
| probably identical with Chovaram. | 7. Perinchellur.   |
| 2. Perumanam.                     | 8. Venganád.   |
| 3. Irinjalakuda.                  | 9. Alattúr.  |
| 4. Panniyur.                      | 10. Edakkád.   |
| 5. Trissivapérur (Trichur).       |  |

Of these, only two villages, Panniyur and Chovaram, are mentioned in the Syrian deed of 774 A. D. (or more probably 1320), because by that time the several gramams became organised into two factions known as the Panniyurkúr and the Chovaramkúr, so that it may be believed that there were only

1. Cochin Census Report, 1901, Vol. I. pages 146-147.

two organised villages of the Brahmans in Malabar at the time, both vedic and non-vedic. The other *grāmams* as well as others now extinct, either probably branched off from the two organised villages or settled in the country subsequently.

The religious seclusion of the Nambuthiris has always been the chief motive in the choice of their habitations which are situated either on the slopes of hills or on the banks of rivers abounding in natural beauty. Their *illams* or *manás* (houses) are in the midst of extensive compounds forming spacious gardens in which are grown mango, jack, tamarind and other trees. The *vilva* and *tulasi* are also grown therein. These compounds contain *sarpakávus* or serpent groves in the centre of which is the image of the cobra in granite, and sometimes its living representative haunts the house as if in recognition of the memorial. In the same compound or close by, may be seen a tank or two for bathing, two or three wells for gardening and domestic use, and a temple for worship. These, in fact, form the inseparable accompaniments. Wherever there is a temple close by, the Nambuthiri may prefer to bathe in the tank attached to it; but his favourite bathing ghat is always the tank near the house and owned by him. Often it is provided with a shed which may be used as a protection against sun and rain. It is here that after their early bath they perform their *japams* (meditations), vedic recitations, and *namaskúrums* (prostrations) towards the Sun, and at times it is even used as a place of rest.

A Nambuthiri house generally faces the east, and at a distance from it is the gate-house, provided with a room and an open space on either side; here the servants remain and keep watch during the night. It has, in some cases, an upper storey mainly intended to lodge strangers and visitors. Between the gate-house and the main building there is a wide open space called *mittam*, with a raised foot-path either paved with bricks or hardened with mud.

The house itself is quadrangular or square in form with a court-yard in the centre surrounded by rooms on all sides. On the east or west of the court-yard is a room for the bachelor members, to which strangers are also admitted. The rest of the rooms are for the zenana. Right on the opposite side and beyond the central court-yard is the *arapura*, made entirely of massive wood-work where the valuables of the house are kept.

The two rooms on each side of this are the store-room and the bed-room. The kitchen, which is as a rule spacious, is on the northern side, and close to it is the well from which water is drawn for cooking and washing. In some *illams*, attached to the kitchen is a large dining-hall for strangers and visitors. Several other rooms are set apart for vedic studies, the worship of the family deities and for the performance of ceremonies. Many of the houses consist of one or two storeys which are partitioned into rooms and halls.

Most of the houses are palatial structures built of laterite, cemented with mud or mortar. The door-ways and windows are sometimes well carved, and these edifices which were at one time thatched are now tiled. The furniture of a Nambuthiri house is both very simple and scanty, and small wooden planks either oblong or made in the form of a tortoise (*kúrmasana*) are used for devotional purposes, and at other times, especially when taking meals, are used in the place of chairs; but skins of the tiger and spotted deer more often take the place of these. In the rich families are to be found swinging cots hung from the ceiling by iron or other metal chains, while a few spare beds and mats may also be found for the use of strangers and visitors.

A little detached from the main houses of the aristocrats are also seen one or two small buildings neatly furnished for the residence of the junior members of the family. They are comfortable enough and well furnished to suit modern tastes; and, as a rule, a portion of the building is used as an office or room for the transaction of the ordinary routine of business.

Thus, the Nambuthiris have all that they want in the localities where they live, often surrounded by their tenants and servants, who, peaceful and contented on account of their lord's kindly nature, genial manners, and considerate treatment, bow down to them not simply as landlords but more as their liege-lords and benefactors, nay, even as the very gods on earth to whom they pay their customary dues year after year willingly and gratefully.

There are some ceremonies<sup>1</sup> to be performed by the head-men of the carpenters and stone-masons at the time of laying the foundation of a house, when the work is in progress

---

1. The Cochin Tribes and Castes, Vol I, pages 281-282,

and also when it is completed; but the most important of these is performed by the Brahmans, and is called *Vāstu-Yāgam*. It is considered to be a vedic rite, for without it no house, temple, or tank is fit for divine use. The word *vāstu* means the site for a dwelling or the dwelling itself. *Vāstospāthi* is one of the names of Indra in the Vedas, but one of the later conceptions, however, of the vedic religion was that of a separate *Vāstospāthi* or house-protector, who was regarded as presiding over the foundation of a house, and to him are addressed hymns in that connection.<sup>1</sup>

This vedic conception of the *Vāstospāthi* was developed in later days into a belief in the existence of a *Vāstunara* or *Vāstupurusha* with a genealogy of his own. Varaha Mahira says that he is some being who defied both worlds, on account of which he was subdued by the host of gods and hurled down. The several parts of the body were subjected to the several gods by whom it was first attacked. It is this being of immortal substance who was destined by the Creator to be the spirit of dwelling-houses.

*Matsya Purāna* gives a different account. Simhika, wife of Kāśyapa, gave birth to two sons, Rāhu and Vāstu. The elder had his neck severed by Hari, while the younger was cast down by the gods. There is also a fuller but partially different account given in another part of the same work to the effect that, when Siva destroyed the demon Andaka, a drop of perspiration fell on the ground from Siva's forehead which assumed the form of an immense and terrific being who greedily devoured all the blood of the demons who had been killed in the battle. Still insatiate, he practised austerities and obtained from the same deity as a boon the power of devouring the whole world. Then the gods and the anti-gods all combined to bind him down, and each of them entered into that part of his body which was attacked by him. Becoming thus the dwelling of all the gods, he was called Vāstu, and as he was overpowered he enquired how he was to subsist, whereupon the gods allotted to him the *balis* offered within *vāstu* or dwelling by the house-holder as well as the offerings made in the *Vāstōpasamana Yajna*. This satisfied him and from that time the *Vātsu-Yajna* has been ordained for the same.

1. Rig Veda, VII, pages 54-55; Muir's Sanskrit Texts, Vol. I, page 273.

The daily offerings to the Vāstu spirit are mentioned in the *Aswalayana Grihya Sutra*.

The ceremony, as performed in these days, opens with the performance of *Grihya Yajna* or sacrifices offered to the planets which according to Matsya Purana are a necessary preliminary for the efficacy of all optional (*kāmya*) religious rites. Another preliminary rite consists of the performance of *Vridhi-Srādhm* or *Nāndeemukha* which has to be performed on every occasion of prosperity. The specific ceremonies begin with the division of the ground-plan of the house into eighty-one squares by drawing ten lines from east to west and ten others from north to south. In some cases, the aggregate of squares is called *Vāstumandala*. The large square is supposed to correspond to the body of Vāstunara, and its component squares are taken to represent particular limbs and organs which, in accordance with the mythical story already noticed, are believed to be the seats of particular divinities who are worshipped therein.<sup>1</sup>

The *hómam* (sacred fire) which has next to be performed in this connection is the connecting link between the rituals of the Vedās and the Purānas (Matsya Purāna). *Vishnu-dharmottara* directs Vastupathi *mantrams* to be recited at the sacrifice to the house-god and at all stages of the ceremony. The oblation of milk, rice, and sugar seems to be very much favoured.<sup>2</sup> According to *Dēvi Purāna*, the worship of the Vastumandala ought to be followed by the consecration of a water vessel in the middle of Vāstumandala sacred to Brahma and the water from the same has to be poured on the ground following the lines which make on the smaller squares. Finally, a pit, one cubit square and four fingers deep, is made in the middle and is plastered with cow-dung and sandal paste. The worshipper then meditates on Brahma and, pouring the water from the sacred vessel into the pit, throws flowers into it. If they float to the right, the omen is good; if otherwise, bad luck will ruin the family. The pit is then filled up with sacred

1. If the Vastumandala cannot be prepared, on the authority of the Padmapuranam, the worship of the presiding deities is to be performed before the sacred Saligramam stone. It is considered that the Gods, Asuras, Yakshas, as well as the fourteen worlds are all present at the place where Vishnu is present in the form of that stone.

2. Matsya Purana.



grains and pure earth from the fields. On the conclusion of the ceremony, the officiating priest is given a present of a few rupees and a pair of cloths. The worshipper then goes through the usual ablution which is enjoined after the performance of every sacrifice, and feasts the Brahmans.

The selection of persons for marriage is guided mainly by two rules; firstly, that they must be outside the family; secondly, that they must be inside the caste. The first of these rules is only a survival of that singular prohibition against marriage between persons of the same family or tribe which is to be found in almost every part of the world and to which Mr. Mc Lenan has given the name of 'exogamy'. According to the Hindu *sastras*, persons who are related as *sapindas*<sup>1</sup> cannot marry. This relationship extends to six degrees where the common ancestor is a male; but there is a difference of opinion as to the rule when the common ancestor is a female. Manu<sup>2</sup> and Apastamba<sup>3</sup> extend the prohibition in the latter case also to six degrees, while Gautama<sup>4</sup>, Vishnu<sup>5</sup>, Vasishta<sup>6</sup>, Sankha<sup>7</sup>, Narada<sup>8</sup> and Yagnavalkya<sup>9</sup> limit it to four degrees.

To this restriction is also added another rule that the parties to the marriage should not be of the same *gotra* or *pravara*, i. e., they must not be of the same family nor invoke the same ancestor. Conjugal relationship between first cousins is seldom allowed. The members of a vedic family avoid matrimonial alliances with those of a non-vedic, but among their various sections inter-marriage is generally in vogue; and marriage among the various subdivisions of the non-vedic community is endogamous. The most important Nambuthiri *grāmams* (villages) inhabited by the vedic members are Perumanam, Irinjalakuda and Venganad. Between the members of the first village south of Trichur, and those of the second, there is no inter-marriage; and this restriction does not

1. Beginning from the bride or bridegroom and counting exclusive of both six or four degrees upward according as the relationship with the common ancestor is reached within the aforesaid degrees on both sides, the persons so related are known as Sapindas.

2. Chap. III, Verse 5.

3. Chap. II, Verses 5, II.

4. Chap. IV, Verses 2-5.

5. Chap. XXIV, Verses 9-10.

6. Chap. VIII.

7. Chap. IV, Verse 1.

8. Narada, Chap. XII, Verse 7.

9. Yagnavalkya, Chap. I, page 52-53.

concern those of the first said village north of Trichur. It is also said that Nambuthiris of South Malabar seldom marry girls of the families of the same status from North Malabar, while no objection is held against girls being given in marriage to their caste-men in North Malabar. Among the Nambuthiris as a class, only the eldest son is allowed to marry, and this custom has long been in force to keep the family property intact and to prevent its disintegration by partition which the marriage of the younger sons might necessitate. It is only under exceptional circumstances that the second or other junior members enter into wedlock with women of the same caste. Very often the absence of a son to the eldest married brother and the necessity of providing the girls with husbands lead a junior member to enter into conjugal relationship with a girl of the same caste. In the latter case he marries the sister of the man who marries the sister of the former with a view to avoid the payment of heavy dowries. As a rule, however, the junior members enter into *sāmbandham* with the young women of other castes below them up to the high caste Nayers. A kind of mixed marriage sometimes takes place among them in some parts of the State. A girl of vedic parentage, owing to poverty or other causes, allowed to be married to a young man of the non-vedic class. The girl, by this union, is supposed to lose her status; for, after she has commenced to live with her husband in his own house, she is forbidden to mingle freely with the members of her own family, or take part in the ceremonies performed there. In cases where a young man cannot get a suitable wife, he may marry the daughter of his maternal uncle, after he has taken a ceremonial bath, which signifies that all relationship with her has ceased, and that she, like any other, is eligible to enter into conjugal relationship with him. In the selection of a bride or bridegroom, the caste-men pay special attention to the following:— That the girl is free from bodily and mental defects, that she belongs to a respectable family, that she inherits the virtues of ten generations, is younger in age, and is a bride that has not been promised to any one else, and that the bridegroom is endowed with all accomplishments, is of the same caste, and social standing, is well read in the Vedas, is youthful, intelligent, and agreeable.

Nambuthiri girls are married both before and after they reach the age of puberty. They have no voice in the choice of their husbands, whom their parents or elder brothers choose for them. When a girl is to be married, her father, or her brother in his absence, selects a suitable young man whose horoscope he obtains and submits to a learned astrologer. In the event of a proper agreement between his horoscope and that of the girl and a favourable decision being given by the astrologer, the bridegroom's father is approached. If he approves of the match, he is invited to talk the matter over in the presence of friends and relations of both sides, when the bridegroom's price is also ascertained. Sometimes many days, even months, pass before the fathers agree as to the sum of money, which should be paid by the bride's father to the bridegroom. The sum varies from 1,000 to 2,000 rupees in ordinary well-to-do families and from 4,000 to 5,000 rupees among the Adyans of the aristocratic families. University degrees and other similar qualifications, which command a high price in the matrimonial market among the east coast or *Paradesi* Brahmans, count for nothing in the case of the Nambuthiri bachelors. Property is the only consideration, and every detail bearing on status and respectability of the family increases the price, the bride's father will have to pay.

From the date on which the settlement is made, the girl is regarded as betrothed, which is only a kind of contract entered into by the bride's and the bridegroom's fathers in the presence of some respectable members of the community, and seldom revoked. On this point, Manu says, "Neither ancients nor moderns who were good men have ever given a damsel in marriage after she had been promised to another man."<sup>1</sup> But Nārada and Yāgnavalkya admit the right of a father to annul the betrothal to one suitor, if a better match presents itself; and either party to the contract is allowed to withdraw from it where certain specific defects are discovered. But the former says that a man who wishes to withdraw from his contract without proper cause may be compelled to marry the girl even against his will. But it is now settled by legal decisions that contract to marry will not be specifically enforced, that the only remedy is an action for

---

1. Manu, Chapter IX, page 99.

damages, and that all expenses resulting from the abortive contract would be recoverable by such an action. The word betrothal' means a promise to marry, and it is often celebrated with much ceremony.

The auspicious day for the wedding being fixed, the ceremony begins by a few persons leaving the bride's *illam* to invite the bridegroom and his party. Before leaving his own *illam* or house, the bridegroom, after being shaved, adorns himself in his best, and with his friends and relations partakes of a feast, called *Ayalunu*<sup>1</sup>, the expenses of which are defrayed by the bride's father. He makes the customary obeisance (*abhivádaya*)<sup>2</sup> to his elders (father, uncles, mother, aunts, teacher, family priest), and receives a cake and a garland from his mother who puts on his head some fried grains of paddy, as a token of blessing. Before starting, he makes a speech to those around him, goes round a cow, a bullock, a few of the sacred trees, and worships the tutelary deity; and on leaving the house with his party, as on all occasions, he must be careful to put his right foot first. He is also made to recite some verses of an auspicious nature called *mangala súktams* and *swasthi súktams*. Should he at starting meet an owl, a dog, or a cat, he should pass on their left; should he, however, see a fox, a monkey, a kite or a mungoose, he must recite certain *mantrams* and make a few gifts to the Brahmans on reaching his destination<sup>3</sup>. With him go a number of Nayars, his *adiyars* (those who count him as their liege lord), and of these, some brandish swords, the emblem of the Adyan Nambuthiri of Malabar. The *árpu* and *kurava* (shouts of men and women) are among the characteristic features in the procession. At the gate of the bride's *illam* a number of Nayar ladies dressed as the

1. *Ayalunu*—The bridegroom, facing the east, sits on a plank in front of a large plantain leaf on which are served rice and curries. A lighted lamp and the eight auspicious articles (*Ashtamangalyam*) are placed in a conspicuous place near him. An offering to Ganapathi is also made, when his mother says:—"Eat well and mayst thou be blessed with conjugal happiness."

2. *Abhivádaya*—The following statement is made when the bridegroom-elect prostrates before his elders:—"Nilakanta Sarma (his name) aham asmi bhau: I, Nilakanta Sarma, prostrate before thee." To this the following reply is made:—"Swasthi-ayushman-bhava-sowmya-Nilakanta Sarma: Oh mild Nilakanta, mayst thou live long." He makes the customary obeisance (*abhivádaya*) to his elders (father, uncles, mother, aunts, teacher and family priest).

3. *Mahabharata, Anusasana Parva*, hap. CL, verses 65-68, page 323.

Nambuthiri women of the family (for, the latter cannot appear on account of their being *goshas*) welcome and receive him with *ashtamangalyam* and lighted lamps.

The bridegroom elect enters the court-yard outside the house, and after washing his feet and reciting *mangala-sūktams* takes his seat in the *purattalam* or entrance hall on a plank facing east; then the bride's father dressed in tattoo form, sitting in front of him and clasping him by the right hand, invites him to wed his daughter (*Kulichu Vekkuḷa*, bathe and marry)—an invitation which he formally accepts by saying "amin—yes". After his bath, he returns clad in the tattoo form; and washing his feet and putting on a ring of *darbha* or *kusa* grass (*Eragrostis cynosuroides*), resumes his seat in the usual eastward position. He first performs a *puja* to Ganapathi and *Gramadevatha* (village deity) by placing a few annas near a lighted lamp (*velakkattu panam vekkuḷa*). He then invites four Brahmans, and gives each of them a few annas with betel leaves and arecanuts. This ceremony, which is called *Asramavichcheda Prāyaschittam*, is performed in expiation of any sins which may have been committed during his bachelorhood.

The ceremony of *Nāndeemukha* is next performed in propitiation of the minor deities or a class of gods called *Viśvedevas* concerned in *Sradh* and the departed manes (*pitris*), when similar gifts are made to four Nambuthiris who are regarded as representing them. Bringing the Ganapathi *puja* to an end, he removes the *kusa* ring and washes his hands.

The next ceremony is the *punnyaham* (consecration of water), for which again four Nambuthiris are invited and seated on planks in front of the bridegroom elect. They are given flowers, sandal paste, etc., and a bell-metal vessel containing water is placed in their midst and propitiated. Wearing the *kusa* ring and touching the vessel with the *kusa* grass, they recite vedic hymns which are believed to sanctify the water. This sanctified water is to be sprinkled on him with a view to make fit to perform the wedding ceremonies. He takes off the *darbha* ring, washes his feet, puts on the caste marks and again replaces the ring.

The bridegroom then enters the *nadumittam* with a Nambuthiri carrying a lamp before him, and takes his seat on a low wooden stool (*peedham*), when a Nayar woman waves round his

body from behind, a vessel of water with sugar dissolved in it. The bride's father makes obeisance to him (*abhivadaya*), and is saluted in the same way. He gives the bridegroom a vessel of water with which he performs his *âchamana* (sipping of water with the aid of palm), and receives from him four double lengths of cloth to be given to the bride who takes two of

jack-wood. Round the altar are also placed four blades of *darbha* grass, a small bell-metal vessel, an earthen pot full of water, a pair of grind-stones (*ammi* and *ammikuzha*), a small winnowing pan containing parched paddy (*malar*) and a copper vessel of ghee with a sacrificed ladle made of *plásu*. With a formal ceremony involving the recital of holy *mantrams*, the sacred fire is preserved.

At this time the bride, who is completely veiled, is conducted to the *kizhakkini*, with a Nayar woman carrying the *áyirattiri* (a lamp with a thousand wicks). She waves this light round her face and retires, when the bride, facing the west, stands on the north-east side of the fire. The bridegroom, washing his hands, putting on the *kusa* ring and wearing the garland, resumes his seat in front of the fire. Here she is brought face to face with the bridegroom whom she honours by throwing flowers at his feet and presenting a garland, and they are required to gaze at each other in turns during the recital of vedic hymns, the translation of which is as follows:—“Be thou, mild eyed and friendly to me, do good to me and my kindred. Let thy heart be gentle and radiant. Bear living sons and worship the gods. Be of good repute. To my men and cattle bring thou happiness.” This is called *Mukhadarsanam* (face beholding or *Avayavasonirupanam*).

Meanwhile, in another apartment (*vadakkini*), the bride's father after washing his feet and putting on the *kusa* ring performs a *puja* to Ganapathi and other rites more or less similar to those performed by the bridegroom. The bride dressed and veiled in the cloths presented to her by her husband and with a *válkannadi* (bell-metal mirror) is conducted to the *vadakkini* where she is sprinkled with the sanctified water by her father and a few other Nambuthiris. With an offering to Siva and his consort Párvathi, the *táli* is then brought in a small vessel containing the sanctified water and placed by the side of the family deity to which daily worship is paid. After another *puja* to Ganapathi, the father ties the *tali* round her neck. Her mother gives her a *tulasi* (*Ocymum sanctum*) garland. This is followed by another important ceremonial—the handing over of the bride to the bridegroom. This is called *Udakaþúrva Kanyakadánam*—the gift of the maiden with water, the most meritorious of all gifts. The bride

and her father stand facing the west, with the bridegroom facing them, and all the three stretch out their right hands, the bride's hand being between the hands of the other two. The Nambuthiri priest pours some water into the right hand of the bride's father, and this goes into the bride's hand and thence into the bridegroom's. This is done three times, and the bride's father then recites the vedic *mantrams* "*Sahadharmam Charta* (mayst thou tread the path of duty)" which is also uttered thrice, and gives to the bride the dowry which she in turn hands over to the bridegroom. The bride, then passing between him and the fire, sits on an *ammana palaka* (a low wooden seat made of *chamata* and shaped like a tortoise) on the east of the altar, and the bridegroom seated on a similar *palaka* on her left, burning the *edham* except one piece of *plásu* and the *darbha* grass with which the bundle is tied, makes an oblation of ghee *ágháram*.

The bridegroom then rising from his seat, turns to the right and faces the bride, who with the mirror in her left hand stretches her right palm upwards with the fingers closed. This he clasps and takes his seat again. This clasping of the hand is *Páni-grahanam*, which is accompanied by the recital of certain *mantrams* and the blessings of the Brahmins assembled there.<sup>1</sup> The bride's brother or somebody else, clad in the tattoo form, takes the mirror from her hand and places it on the plank close by, so that she may see her own reflection in it. Then he leads her three times round the fire and the water-pot so that their right sides are turned towards the fire. While doing so, he murmurs certain vedic hymns, which may be translated thus: "This am I, that art thou; this I, that thou; the Heaven I, Earth thou; the Saman I, Rik thou; come, let us here marry. Let us beget offspring, be loving, bright with genial mind, may we live a hundred autumns." Each time after he has so led her round, he makes her tread on the stone with the words, "Tread on this stone; like a stone be firm; overcome the enemies; tread the foes down." Then a little ghee is poured into her joined hands, and two handfuls of fried paddy from the winnowing pan added to it then, is three times, little by little, brushed

i. If her thumb is seized, male children may be born to him; if her other fingers, female children only; if the hand on the side together with the thumb, both male and female children.



into the fire. This is called *Lājahomam*, at the conclusion of which the bridal pair go round it, passing outside the *kumbham* (water-pot) but not the grind-stone and pan. The substance of the hymns recited at the time is: "May Aryaman, Pushan, Agni, Varuna, to whom the girl has sacrificed with parched paddy, relieve her from other occupations and help her to unite with her husband to enjoy the happy conjugal life." There is also another important part of the ceremony called *Asmá-róhanam*, which symbolises immutability. The bride and the bridegroom stand west of the grind-stones, and her right foot is lifted thereon by the bridegroom; then taking her feet one by one, he places them on the stones, and then grasps her feet and the stones with both hands. *Lājahomam Pradaṣṣhi-nam* (going round the fire) and *Asmá-róhanam* are each repeated thrice. This is followed by another important rite called *Saptapati* or seven paces, for which the bridegroom holding the bride by the hand leads her seven steps (one for force, two for strength, three for wealth, four for well-being, five for offspring, six for sons, seven for friends) and then advises her to be devoted to him, and bear him many sons who may live long. The following is the translation of the hymns recited for the *Saptapati*:—"Now we have taken seven steps together, be thou my companion. Let us be companions. Let me have thy companionship. May I never part from thee. Let us be united. Let us always take counsel together with glad hearts and mutual love. May we grow in strength and prosperity together. Now are we one in minds, deeds, and desires". Then the bridegroom unlooses the two braided tresses of hair, one of each side of the top of the bride's head, repeating the vedic text: "I loose thee from the fetters of Varuna with which the very auspicious Savitri has bound thee."<sup>1</sup> They then pass between the grind-stones and the fire, and seat themselves on the west of the earthen pot facing the east, the bride behind the bridegroom. Then their heads are brought into close juxtaposition, and the bridegroom sprinkles himself and the bride with water from the pot.<sup>2</sup>

They then return to the seats west of the altar and face north, ostensibly to look at the pole-star (Druvan), the star

1. Rig Veda X. 85, 24.

2. Aswalyana Grihya Sutra, Chap. I, Kandika 7-9.

*Arundhati*, and the seven *Rishis*<sup>1</sup> (*Ursa Major*) which the bridegroom is supposed to point out to the bride, while he teaches her a short *mantram* invoking the blessing of a long life on her husband.

The bridegroom then makes two other oblations (*Swishtakrit homam* and *Dharmi homam*), pouring ghee on the sacred fire, on which he places the *paridhis*, the remaining *edhmams*, *darbha* grass and the rest of the ghee. The bridegroom removes the *kusa* ring, puts on marks of holy ashes (*bhasmam*) and terminates the *pūja* to Ganapathi.

These in brief are the various items of the religious portions of the wedding ceremonial, according to Aswalayana Grihya Sutra, at the bride's house, of which *Saptapati* forms the binding portion, but among Nambuthiris, *Udakapūrvam* and *Panigrahanam* are also the most important. It must be noted that the *Mangalya Sūtram* or the tying of the *tali* (marriage badge) is nowhere among the Brahmans looked upon as a marriage rite, though the popular belief is otherwise. Among the Nambuthiris, the father ties the *tali* round the girl's neck, while among other classes of Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and even among most of the Sudras, the bridegroom does it at the auspicious hour.

After the first day's ceremony in the bride's house, the bridegroom and his party take the bride together with the sacrificial fire to his own *illam*, (if it is close by), for which the ceremony—*Aupāsanam Kāchukal*, or the preparation of the sacrificial fire—must have been performed as the last, in the bride's *illam* (house), and the particulars of which are given here. A piece of *chamata*, six inches in length, is held in the right hand, and twelve similar bits of *kusa* grass in the left hand; and the former is heated in the *Aupāsana Agni* with the recital of a vedic hymn which signifies:—“May the sacred all-knowing fire get into the *chamata* twig and give us happiness”. The two along with the wooden ladle (*sruvam*) are tied and neatly packed in the spathe of an areca palm to be used in his *illam*. After their arrival here the *chamata* is ignited, and the *darbha* grass and ghee are offered. This is called *Aupāsanam Idukāl*, for which the sacred

1. Kasyapa, Atri, Bharadwaja, Viswamitra, Gauthama, Jamadagni, Vasishtha,

altar is prepared in much the same manner as before. Then a similar *hómam* called *randam* or second *homam* is also prepared in the following manner. Having given its place to the nuptial fire, and having spread to the west of it, a bull's hide with the neck to the east and with the hair outside, the bridegroom makes oblations, while the bride sits on that hide and takes hold of him, with the four verses, "May Prajapathi create offspring to us" (Rig Veda X, 85-43 seq.). Verse by verse and with the verse "May all the gods unite" (Rig Veda X, 85-47), he partakes of curds and gives thereof to her or he besmears their two hearts with the rest of the *Ajya* (ghee) of which she has sacrificed.

The bridal pair then spend a few moments closeted together in the same room, she lying down on a skin spread over a piece of new cloth on the floor, and he sitting by her side on an *ammana palaka*. This is called *Dikshaverikkukal*. After sunset also is performed the *Aupásana hómam*, the offerings of *chamata*, and *Viswadéva homam*, i. e., offerings of boiled rice. The latter may be performed then or postponed to the next afternoon, if they cannot, for want of time, be performed on the wedding day. The performance of these ceremonial offerings has to be continued throughout their life-time. The first three days on which these *hómams* are performed are the days of mourning (*deeksha*) during which the dress is not changed. Aswalayana says:—"From that time they should eat no saline food, they should be chaste, wear no ornaments, sleep on the ground three nights or twelve nights or even one year. The underlying idea of this enforced *Brahmacharyam* is that abstinence in the immediate vicinity of the exciting cause brings merit to the parties. The longer the temptation is resisted, the greater the reward in the character of the offspring."

On the fourth day the conjugal pair have an oil-bath, and the *deeksha* is considered to be at an end. The *Vaiswadéva* ceremony is next performed. After performing the usual *Aupásanam* in the evening, the formalities for the *Sékam* (nuptials) are begun. The God Ganapathi is then adored. The bride is conducted to the bridal chamber at the auspicious hour, when, at the bidding of a Nayar woman, who standing at the door says, "*akattu ezhunnellenum*, (Mayst thou go

inside)"; the bridegroom visits her with two jasmine garlands, one of which is put on the lamp in the south-east corner of the room and other round the bride's neck. He then rubs the upper part of the body with an ointment known as *chântu*; and she herself smears the lower part. They then come out, bathe, dress themselves neatly and take a dose of the sanctified water. After a few other ceremonies, they eat from the same leaf. Actual cohabitation begins that night. They generally require an auspicious hour for the nuptials on the fourth night, and if that night is not auspicious, some other night is chosen. The nuptial couch for the bridal pair is but a grass mat or a coarse country blanket covered with a white sheet with a little ridge of rice and paddy signifying plenty. The final ceremony is the *hómam* called *Sthálipákam*, which is performed on the day after the full-moon day and after the second *hómam*. If the full-moon is at the full *názhika* before sunset or earlier, it may be celebrated on the full-moon itself.

Among the Nambuthiris who follow *Bódháyana grihya sūtra* the bridegroom wears the *kankanam* (a string round the wrist of his right hand) and carries a bamboo with sixteen points symbolical of their married state. The bridegroom and the bride are said to catch fish about the size of minnows called in Malayalam *mannathukanni* (eyes looking upwards), in a pot of water with a piece of cloth as net. They then anoint each other with oil and the bride combs the bridegroom's hair, and in the evening the bridegroom adorns the bride with flowers and makes her look into a mirror. On the sixth or the tenth day, a few Brahmans are treated to a feast to please the deities. The couple then go to an *udumbara* tree under which some rice, curd and ghee are placed in some *kusa* grass, and an offering is made of flowers and sandal-wood. The *kankanam* is removed, and the bamboo staff, the arrow and the mirror used during the ceremonies are given to the priest (*Vádhyán*) and the wedding is practically over.

Among the Nambuthiris who follow the *Kaushitaka grihya sūtras*, the following custom is in vogue. On reaching the house of the bridegroom, after the termination of the first day's ceremonies at the bride's *illam*, they resume the ceremonies before the sacred fire, that has been brought along with them; at one stage on the lap of the young wife is placed the son of a woman who has born only male children, and some

fruits are given to him. Then says the husband, "Ye fruits, that bear seeds, by your blessings may my wife bear likewise". Turning to her, he continues, "In the house of ours mayst thou be happy with children, study to fulfil the duties of the mistress of the house. Unite thy body with mine. Honour guests and tend the sacred fires with all care. When thou hast grown old after long years of happiness, thou shalt teach thy sons and grandsons the duties of worship and sacrifice."

Besides the form of marriage above described, there is another called *Sārswadānam* which may be celebrated under one of the three conditions. When a Nambuthiri breathes his last leaving his wife and a daughter behind him, the former may invite a Brahman to perform the funeral rite of her husband, after which she may make a gift of all her property along with the daughter duly married to him. If a Nambuthiri leaves only a daughter and distant *Sapindas*, one of the latter may be asked to perform the funeral ceremonies for which he may claim a share of the property of the deceased; and in such a case the rest of the property is given as a gift to the suitable Brahman, the gift being also given in marriage to the same man. In the absence of any distant relative to give away the girl, a close neighbour performs the functions of a father (by giving her in marriage to a suitable young man). The result of such a union is that, if a son is born, he inherits the property, and is, for all practical purposes, the son of his deceased father-in-law. If there is no male issue or on the death of such an issue, the property of the wife's family does not belong to the husband, but reverts to the family of the father-in-law.

The marriage custom above described appears to be the survival of a custom in vogue among the Brahmans in ancient times, according to which, a father, who, having no male issue, gave his daughter to a young man, and appropriated to himself the son born of such a marriage, either by agreement or by a mere act of intention on his part without any consent asked for or obtained.<sup>1</sup> Hence it was that a man was warned not to marry a girl without brothers, lest her father should take her first son as his own.<sup>2</sup> Vasishta quotes a text of the Vedas as showing that "the girl who has no brother,

<sup>1</sup> Mayne's Hindu Law, page 77.

<sup>2</sup> Gautama XXVIII, 19, 20, Manu III, II.

comes back to the males of her own family, to her father, and the rest. Returning she becomes their son."<sup>1</sup> In her case, therefore, the father seems to have retained his dominion over her to the extent of being able to appropriate her son if she wished it. The same result, of course, is followed where the marriage took place with an express agreement that this dominion should be reserved.<sup>2</sup>

*Marriage among the Thazhakkatt Ammomans*:—There is in the northernmost part of North Malabar, an old village called Payyanur inhabited by a class of Nambuthiris known as *Ammomans* (maternal uncles) among whom inheritance is matrilineal. There were once sixteen flourishing families, all of which are now extinct with the exception of four, namely, (1) *The Tházhakkát Mana*, (2) *The Peramangalath Mana*, (3) *The Kunna Mangalath Mana*, (4) *The Kunnath Mana*. The members of the first two families are *sapindás* and are not, on that account, eligible for marriage, but they and those of the other two may inter-marry. The families, though matrilineal have the same form of marriage as that prescribed for other Nambuthiris, with slight variations. There are not males enough to marry their young women, and at the same time, Nambuthiris of other villages consider it a degradation to enter into matrimonial alliances with them; for after marriage, they are not allowed to mingle with the members of their own families. Consequently, when a girl in one of the above families has to be married, a poor vedic Nambuthiri of another village is adopted into another of these surviving families, and is then induced to marry the girl by a tempting offer of money and other comforts. The marriage customs are in accordance with the *Bódháyana grihya sutras*, but after the performance of *Pánigrahanam* and *Lájahomam*, the bridegroom makes a pretence of taking the bride to his own house for the performance of the remaining conjugal ceremonies. A member of the bride's family then requests him to go back to her house and stay there and promises that he, with the bride and the children of that union, will be supported during their life-time out of the family funds. The remaining ceremonies are gone through during the next three days, after which the husband resides in the family of his wife during her lifetime. A woman by this union cannot, either by divorce of, or after the death of

<sup>1</sup> *Vasishtha*, XVII, 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Baudhayana* II, 12.

her husband, mate with another. The customs are mostly Brahmanical though the inheritance is in the female line. The origin of this custom is ascribed to Parasurama, who, for the sake of the Sudras, induced the Brahmins to follow the inheritance in the matrilineal line, and all refused to do so except those of the Payyanur village, and the only families of this kind now existing are the wealthy *Thazhakkât Mana* and a few others of the said village.

The vedic *mantrams* recited at the various stages of the wedding ceremony, other portions of the vedic texts<sup>1</sup> early *Grihya* and *Dharma Sūtras*<sup>2</sup> of *Sāṅkhayana Asvalāyana, Jaimini, Bauddhāyana*, and others, as also the *Smṛithis*, of *Manu, Nārada*, and puranas<sup>3</sup> bear unmistakable evidence to the fact that Brahman girls were married after puberty during the vedic age. Instances are found of young women who enjoyed the right to exercise the choice of husbands for themselves. Marriage then was as optional with the female as with the male sex, and there are instances of young women who remained with their parents unmarried, either rendering filial service or doing penance and speculating on the absolute<sup>4</sup>. But towards the end of what Mr. Dutt calls the Epic age, the practice of marrying girls before puberty began to make its appearance. Gobila, Vasishta, Gautama and others advocated the marriage of girls either before puberty or within the first three years thereafter, which was subsequently modified into three *ritus*; <sup>5</sup> if left unmarried beyond that time they might themselves arrange a marriage with a suitable young man. The whole question, however, is one of conjecture.

It is said that apparently since Ushastis and Chākrayana's time, an influential sect had grown up who approved of early marriage. The view that the girls should be married before puberty developed partly from the fear of their defilement, and

1. Marriage after puberty, by V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, pp. 24-27

2. Do. Do. pp. 28-37

3. Do. Do. pp. 36-37, 72, 70-74.

4. Do. Do. pp. 24-25

5. *Ritus*. (a) Vedavyasa Ch. II, verse 7. If owing to neglect of her guardian, maiden attains puberty he incurs the sin of embryo murder at each *ritu* and becomes a *patita* (fallen from purity).

(b) Yama Chap. 3, verses 18-22. If, a girl remaining unmarried in her father's house attains puberty, he incurs the sin of embryo murder, she is a *Sudra*.

(c) Vide *Saṁhitās of Sankara*, Chap. 15. *Angiras* verse 126-128.

partly because of the belief that the neglect of parents to provide husbands for their daughters who were fit to conceive and who, being eligible for marriage, was tantamount to an embryo murder at each *ritu*. Considerations such as these, began to assert themselves, and were laid hold of by the later *Smṛithi* writers, who began to lay down elaborate rules regarding matrimonial alliances before puberty, and the idea of the embryo murder, already referred to, was much exaggerated. The custom of post nubile marriage was not yet condemned wholesale, but gradually owing to the altered conditions in the later periods, the view that marriage should take place before puberty became generally held. Yama, Parāśara, Samvartha and other writers prohibited the custom of post nubile marriage, showering curses upon the delinquent parents for their negligence and proclaiming all of them to be out-castes. They also mentioned the rewards that went to parents who gave their daughters in marriage before they reached puberty, and emphasised the gifts of them before puberty as producing great merits, the principal motive being not their conjugal happiness, but the father's spiritual gain. The religious idea of the time, such as the importance of purity of birth, and the chastity of the mother, grand-mother and the great grand-mother, whose names a Brāhman has to pronounce on the *śradha* day favoured this change. Thus, the gradual lowering of the position of women from the standard of the vedic times, and the distrust of their virtue induced by the example of prematrimonial license set by the Dravidian races, must have had its effect. These facts are not obscurely hinted at in the literature of the subject, and girls were, as at present, married before puberty in order to avoid the possibility of causing scandal later on.<sup>1</sup> When once the custom of infant marriage had been started under pressure of social necessity by the families of the highest groups, a fashion was set which was blindly followed by other groups.

The custom of post nubile marriage is at present found to be in vogue among the Kanyakubja Brahmans of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, the Kulin Brahmans of Bengal, and the Nambuthiris of Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. It is perhaps a relic of the custom which once prevailed among their ancestors of Northern India. This practice was at one time discontinued even by Nambuthiris, but it is said,

---

1. Marriage after puberty, 75-89.



revived by *Mēlattōl Agnihōtri*, who set an example by his marriage with a girl after she had reached the age of puberty. Since then that custom has been in vogue. It is often said that the marriage of girls after puberty among Nambuthiris is due to a superfluity of girls consequent on the marriage of only the eldest son in their families, and that the influence of hypergamy which gives rise to a vigorous competition for bridegrooms in the upper groups, the disappearance of the old custom of bride price, the appearance of the increased bridegroom's price<sup>1</sup> as in all classes of Brahmans everywhere, and the inability on the part of poor parents on account of their scanty means to get their daughters married in time, are the more probable causes why the limit of the marriageable age is beyond the age of puberty. But these facts do not concern the Nambuthiris alone.

"To keep the family property impartible and to avoid having a large number of members in their families, the Nambuthiris, *Bhudevans* (Earth Gods) set up a rule that the eldest son alone should marry in their own caste, while the junior members should solace themselves by forming fugitive connections with the Sudra women. The ingenious arrangement exempts the younger brothers from the responsibility of supporting the children of their fugitive alliance, for these are looked after by the *karanavans* (senior males) of the women's families. The consequence is that, while a large number of the Nambuthiri juniors satisfy themselves with their alliances with Sudra women, an equally large number of Nambuthiri women, must live and die unmarried, vigilantly guarded in the privacy of their houses."

"Owing to the prevalence of the latter custom, Nambuthiri women enter into conjugal relationship at a very advanced age, or die in a state of celibacy, but so tenacious are they of observances that the corpse undergoes all the ceremonies of a marriage.<sup>2</sup> Many Nambuthiri women never get a chance of

1. In the year 997 M. E., the rulers of Travancore and Cochin, in consultation with the then British Resident, simultaneously issued a proclamation, by which the bridegroom's price (*Varadakshina*) for marriage among the Nambuthiris, was limited to 350 fanams. It does not appear to have been enforced at any time, and is still one of the unrepealed regulations of the State.

2. This is totally denied by the Nambuthiris during my investigations in the State.

marriage, but many of them unlike their Brahman sisters of the East Coast remain unmarried, and there are many who die as virgins at an advanced age. Numerous daughters are considered a misfortune as their dowry and other marriage expenses impoverish any but the wealthiest Nambuthiris. The custom which forbids the junior members from marrying in their own caste but encourages them in their fleeting alliances with the women of other castes, and which dooms most of the female members of their own caste to a life-long and enforced celibacy, is one which justice will not hesitate to condemn."

"If the reform movement, already set on foot by the educated Nayers in Malabar and Travancore, should have the effect of driving the Nambuthiri bachelors to enter into wedlock with the women of their own caste, there will be no difficulty in getting their superfluous women married in time. In that case, the aristocratic families, in which the Nayar women consort with the Nambuthiris, will have to form their *sambandham* alliances in their own caste.<sup>1</sup>" In the Cochin State there is no such movement, and the communities are satisfied with the existing state of affairs.

When a Nambuthiri woman is about to become a mother,  Pregnancy rites. three ceremonies are performed for her at different stages of her pregnancy. The first of these is the *Garbhādhānam* rite, and is also called *Chathurti karma*. In ancient times, the bridegroom could approach the bride only on the fourth night after the completion of the marriage ceremony.<sup>2</sup> During the previous day, the young married woman was made to look towards the sun or be in some way exposed to its rays. In the evening she was required to bathe, and her husband, performing the necessary ablutions, went through other prescribed forms of ceremonies. Before he approached his wife he had to recite certain prayers (vedic hymns), the translation of one of them is as follows:— "Let all-pervading Vishnu prepare her womb; let the Creator shape its forms, let Prajapathi be the impregnator; let the Creator give the embryo". This ceremony secures the unborn child from dangers; but it is not always done because it is not considered important.<sup>4</sup>

1. Malabar Marriage Commission report, pages 13-14.

2. The present interval of two, three or four years in some cases, no sanction of the Sutra writers and law-givers.

3. Rig Veda X. 186.

4. Religious Thought and life in India by Monier Williams; page 354.

The important rite (*Garbhādhānam*) is followed after an interval of three months by what is called *Pumsavanam* (male production). It is performed during the third month of gestation before the period of quickening. According to Aswalayana, the wife is to keep a solemn fast, and after the performance of the usual sacrificial rite, a *puja* to Ganapathi, and gifts to Brahmans, she is fed by her husband with two beans and a grain of barley mixed in three handfuls of curds, and made to pray three times for the birth of a male offspring. Some juice of *karuga* grass is also poured into her right nostril. A son to a pious Hindu is the first and the last of all necessary things. It is through him that he pays his own father the debt he owes him for his own life, and secures similar payment for the gift of life bestowed by himself. He sacrifices a mess of cooked food sacred to Prajāpathi, and touches his wife's heart, repeating the verse 'what is hidden, O thou, whose hair is well pared in thy heart, in Prajāpathi that I know; such is my belief. May I fall into distress?'<sup>1</sup> Another supplementary rite for the prevention of miscarriage is also customary in some localities. It is performed by sprinkling the juice of a stock of fresh darbha grass in the wife's right nostril with the repetition of certain *mantrams*. The ceremony is called *Anvalobhana*.

The last of the pregnancy rites is the *Seemantham* or parting of the hair which is generally performed in the fourth, sixth, or eighth month of pregnancy. In the fortnight of the increasing moon *i. e.*, when the moon, stands in conjunction with a *nakshatra* that has the name of masculine gender.

(After a *puja* to Ganapathi and the performance of *Nāndi-mukha*, the husband gives its place to the *āupasana* fire; and having spread to the west of it a bull's hide with the neck to the east, with the hair outside, he makes oblations, while his wife sits on that hide and taking hold of him repeats two verses,<sup>1</sup> the significance of which is 'Prajāpathi generates these offspring, Let Dhātār with favouring mind bestow them, harmonious, like-minded, of like origin. Let the Lord of Prosperity put prosperity in me. He then three times parts her hair upwards (beginning from the front with a branch containing an even number of unripe fruits and with a porcupine's quill that

1. Aswalayana Grihya Sutra, page 80, Sacred books of the East. Vol. XXIX.

has three white spots, and with three bunches of *kusa* grass with the words, *Bhu, Bhuva, Svar Om*').

Certain medical substances, supposed to have a purifying efficacy, are also given, and a particular regimen is prescribed for the remaining period of gestation. The promotion of cheerfulness in the mind of the mother is thought essential, and so, musical performances are sometimes given. These rites are performed at a woman's first pregnancy with a view to purifying her whole person and protecting the well-being of her unborn child. The underlying idea is that the body of the mother should be protected from evil influences at the most critical period of gestation, and that the period for the performance of them is in the third, fourth, sixth, or the eighth month.

The delivery of a Nambuthiri woman takes place on the bare floor. The umbilical cord is cut by a Delivery rites. barber woman who is a midwife. Soon after delivery, the mother is taken to a tank and dipped in cold water, and she is tended and nursed by a Sudra woman for ten days. It is curious to note that the Sudra woman's touch or the taking of meals in her presence entails no pollution during the period of confinement. At other times this deviation from caste rules is highly reprehensible, and entails loss of caste. Each Nambuthiri family may have one or more *Pariyappád* families (families attached to them), depending upon and doing service to them, and the woman of such families are the personal attendants of the Nambuthiri woman. Garlic, pepper, and other bazaar stuffs, and sometimes medicinal herbs and plants dried and bruised are prepared in the form of a mixture, which is administered to her as medicine during this period. Her daily diet consists of nothing more than rice and *ragi* boiled together. In the event of any serious illness, a *Vyđian* or physician is invited to treat her, who sits outside the room and gets all the necessary information through her maid servant. In this respect she is helpless. The physician can never see her or test in person the efficacy of his treatment.

Pollution lasts for ten days, and on the eleventh day, the mother and babe bathe and become purified after a purificatory ceremony. The sanctified water is sprinkled on her as well as the child and the mother also drinks a small dose of it. The

whole house and the close surroundings are purified with the same water, and the washerwoman supplies her with the newly washed cloths in which she is dressed. Only after forty days she is allowed to take part in all the ceremonies, and she approaches her husband only after ninety days. No gifts (*dánams*) are usual at the *punyáham* time.

*Játa-karman* :— Within ninety *naligas* (thirty-six hours) after the birth of a child, its father has a look at its face, and he then bathes after which placing the child on his lap, he makes gifts to the Brahmans in propitiation of *Pitris* and *Vaiswadevas* as well as in celebration of the happy event. He then mixes a small quantity of ghee and honey together, and dissolving a little gold in it, and stirring it with a golden rod to symbolise good fortune, pours it down the throat of the child from a gold vessel. The act is accompanied with the recital of a few *mantrams*. The translation of which is as follows :—“O! long-lived one, mayst thou live a hundred years in this world protected by the gods. Both the ears of the infant were then touched with the golden rod, and another *mantram* repeated. “May Savitri, may Saraswathi, may the Aswins grant thee wisdom. Lastly, the shoulders are rubbed and these words uttered :—“Become firm as a rock, sharp as an axe, pure as gold, thou art the Veda called a son, live thou a hundred years. May Indra bestow on thee his best treasures.” (Rig Veda II. 21, 6, III, 36—10.) If it is not done at this time, the ceremony cannot be performed until after the pollution is over.

*Namakaranam*.—This falls on the twelfth day after the birth of a child, but may also be celebrated on any auspicious day at an auspicious hour. After the usual preliminaries are gone through, the purificatory ceremony is performed a second time, in the middle of which, the father, placing the child on his lap and giving money presents to the Brahmans, whispers the name of the child, beginning with a consonant with a semi-vowel, with the *visarga* at its end, in Sanskrit in its right ear. This latter act is performed also by the mother in her turn. It must be mentioned that the thirteenth-day is not considered auspicious.

*Nishkramanam*.—During the fourth month after birth, a child is carried out in the open air during the fifth part of an auspicious day, and a ceremony is performed and gifts are

made to Brahmans. This is called *Nishkramanam*. A jack tree, *arikka plāvū*, is decorated, and the child is made to place its foot upon its root; after this it is taken in-doors.

*Annaprāsanam*, or first ricegiving.—When the child is six months old, the ceremony of feeding with rice for the first time takes place. An auspicious day is chosen and after the usual preliminaries are gone through, the food is consecrated by means of holy texts. The child being laid upon the lap of the father, gifts of money are made to the Brahmans, and the child is fed with boiled rice, molasses, honey, ghee and water out of a silver vessel. During the process *mantrams*<sup>1</sup> are recited, and the significance of which is “Lord of food, give us food painless and strong; bring forward the giver, bestow power on us on men and animals”. For this ceremony the fifth and seventh months are considered inauspicious.

*Chowlam*.—This signifies the shaving of the child for the first time. It is performed both for boys and girls for the first time, during the third or the fifth year of their age. Sometimes it is postponed to the fifth year in the case of boys, and seventh year in the case of girls. In the case of boys the whole head is shaved except the tuft or *kuduma*. In the case of girls the ceremony consists of the removal of one or two hairs with a razor, though no objection is made even to shaving the head with the exception of an oval patch of hair on the top of the head. The *Māran* acts as the barber and is presented with paddy, rice, cloth and money. A Sudra servant is also present, and he receives the shaven hair in his cloth, when the *Māran* removes it by the razor. The child is then anointed with a little oil and *tālū* (soap) by a Sudra maid-servant of the family who bathes it subsequently. The man and the maid-servants of the Nambuthiri are the Sudras of the higher rank, and are known as *Illakkārs* without whose aid a Nambuthiri cannot get on. The ceremony is believed to have a purificatory effect on the whole character of the boy. According to *Aswālayana*, the child should be placed on the lap of its mother, to the west of the sacred fire. The father should take up his station to the south of the mother, holding in his hand twenty-one stalks of *kusa* grass, he should sprinkle on the head of the child three times a mixture of warm water, repeating the words O! Vayu come hither and with the formula ‘May Aditi

cut my hair, may the waters moisten thee for vigour!' He should then insert three stalks of *kusa* grass seven times into the child's hair on the right side, saying, 'O, divine grass! protect him', then he should cut off a portion of the hair and give it to the mother with the recitation of various texts,<sup>1</sup> leaving one lock (*sikha* or *chuda*) on the top of the head or sometimes three or five locks according to the custom of the family.

*Karnavèdham*.—This takes place after tonsure during the third or the fifth year of the child. Paràsara made it one of the purificatory ceremonies but Aswalayana and Gøbila conspicuously omit it. The boy is sumptuously fed and made to sit with his face towards the east, and a particular mantra, the last hymn of the Sama Veda, is recited. It may be thus translated:—'Let us hear what is good with the ears, let us see what is good with the eyes.' Then the right ear-lobe is pierced. A different *mantram* is recited, a translation of which is given as follows:—'The bow-string, drawn tight upon the bow and leading to success in battle, repeatedly approaches the ear, as if embracing its friend, and wishing to say something agreeable just as a woman makes a murmuring sound (in her husband's ear.)' Then the left ear-lobe is pierced. This ceremony is sometimes performed on the day after birth or at the close of the first year or with the tonsure.

*Vidhyàrambham*:—This is gone through either during the third or fifth year of the boy's age, but more commonly in the fifth year. The auspicious day generally chosen is the *Vijaya Dasami* or *Púja-eduppu* day, i. e., the tenth day of the *Das ra*, but other good *muhurthams* are also known. The ceremony opens with a *púja* to Ganapathi and money presents to Brahmans. The father or guardian of the boy initiates him into a knowledge of the letters. He takes the boy on his knees and writes the alphabet with a piece of gold (generally a gold ring) on his tongue, and whispers the sacred word in his ears. He is taught the fifty-one letters of the alphabet, the letters being

1. "The razor with which Savitri, the knowing one, has shaved (the beard) of kings Soma and Varuna, with that, ye Brahmans, shave now his (hair) that he may be blessed with long life, with old age.' 'With what Dhatri has shaven the head of Brahaspathi, Agni, Indra, for the sake of long life, with that I shave thy head for sake of long-life --of glory and welfare—thus a second time. By what he may at night further see the sun and see it long, with what I shave thy head for the sake of long life, of glory and welfare—thus a third time." Aswalayana Grihyà Sûtras I, 17.

traced in rice by the father holding the ring finger of his son. The goddess Saraswati is herself propitiated with offerings during the nine previous days of the festival. The letters first written are "*Hari Sri Gana Patha Ye namah*", an invocation to Vishnu, Lakshmi and Ganésa, the belief being that the intellectual attainments of a pupil can only be secured by the blessings of these gods.

With the object of obtaining high intellectual merits for children, parents give them butter sanctified by *mantrams* in the belief that it will promote their intellectual gifts. The high intellectual eminence of *Kákkasherry Bhattéry*, one of the most gifted of the Malabar Brahmans, is believed to have been attained in this manner. It is said that the Nambuthiris of Malabar were much dissatisfied with the best prize for scholarship, (a purse of money) being year after year carried away by a foreign Brahman, one *Uddanda Sástri* of *Chóla Désam*, on account of his undisputed superiority over the best Pandits of Malabar in Sanskrit sciences. This was a great mortification to the native Brahmans, who then devised a course of *mantrams* for producing in their own community, an intellectual giant. One of the most approved of the Nambuthiri families was fixed upon for the purpose, and the Brahman and his wife were put upon a regular course of diet and devotional exercises while thousands of Nambuthiris combined for *púja* and *japam*, and for a year communicated their effect to the daily food of the *Kákkasherry* couple. In due course a male child was born and upon it they built their hopes for defeating their foreign rival. The boy to be expected was brought up most carefully, and at the age of twelve, he satisfied their expectations. The competition for the Zamorin's prizes came as usual, and the famous *Uddanda Sástri* was there with his disciples. The Nambuthiri brought this young genius to compete with him. The proud *Sástri* was defeated by the young disciple and the latter won the prize to the astonishment and satisfaction of the whole community. This is an instance to prove the efficacy of the *mantrams* and prayers for the advancement of intellectual power. The *Kákkasherry Illam* cannot boast of ever having had another member of this type, but there are other gifted Nambuthiri families said to be recipients of similar blessings. The *Nárerí*, otherwise called *Kúdallur Illam*, of the Chowaram village once popularly said to be one of



them and every male member of this family, both in times gone by, and within living memory, has been, and is even now, a profound scholar in the Rig Veda and Sanskrit Grammar *Vyākaranam*. The members of this *illam* belong to the chief Adhyan families and possess not only a local but an Indian reputation for learning, their names being well known to the scholars in Benares and Calcutta.

This is the leading or taking of a boy to his *Guru* or spiritual preceptor. This is the ceremony in which

*Upanayanam*.

a Nambuthiri boy is invested with the holy-thread.<sup>1</sup> It takes place in his seventh or eighth year, and the performance of this ceremony makes him twice born *i. e.*, a Brahman. Without it he is considered no better than a Sudra. An auspicious day is chosen during the *Uttarayanam* period, *i. e.*, the six months during which the sun is to the north of the equator. On the morning of the auspicious day, the boy is bathed and is neatly dressed, and he puts on for the first time a *darba* ring. The priest and the boy sit facing east, and the former performs the usual *pūja* to Ganapathi with offerings, an expiatory ceremony (*Prāyścittam*), and *Nāndimukam* and makes gifts of a few annas to Brahmans. Then they throw off the *kusa* rings and wash their feet. The *Punyaham* ceremony is next performed, and the sanctified water is sprinkled on him. Taking a sumptuous meal at the hands of his mother as on the birthday, he stands in the central court-yard (*Nadumittam*) facing east, and rewards his teacher who blesses him. He soon gets himself shaved, bathes and wears a garment that has been not washed. The ceremony opens as usual with the worship of Ganésa at the western side of the sacrificial fire. Facing east with his father beside him, the boy is invested with the holy-thread to which is attached a piece of antelope skin (*Krishnājinam*) and a belt of *munja* grass is buckled on him. While the student takes hold of him, the teacher sacrifices and there stations himself to the north of the fire with his face turned towards the east. He then fills the two hollows of his own and the student's joined hands with water, and with the verse "That we choose of Savitri (RigVeda- V.

1. The thread consists of three fine threads spun into one. It must be white, sixteen feet long, and fastened in a special knot which is called *Brahma-granthi*. It has to be consecrated by the recitation of the vedic texts which are partly *Gayitri* and other hymns from the Black Yajur Veda. At the same time holy water is sprinkled by means of the *kusa* grass.

82-1), he makes with the full hollow of his own hands the water flow down on the full hollow of the student's hands. Having thus poured the water over his hands he should with his own hands seize his (the student's) hand together with the thumb with the (formula), 'By the impulse of God Savithri, with the arms of the two Aswins, with Pushan's hands I seize thy hand'. Then he says, "Savithri has seized thy hand a second time. Agni is thy teacher a third time." Then he is led to an open space where the priest directs him to look at the sun so that the pupils of his eyes may be covered with the sun's rays ; next he goes to the sacrificial altar and offers sacrifices to the fire. The meaning of the verses recited at the time is thus translated. To Agni I have brought a piece of wood, and thorough that piece of wood, increase thou O Agni ; through the Brahman may we increase *Swaha* ! Having put the fuel on the fire, and having touched it, he threetimes wipes off his face with the words, "With splendour I anoint myself. On me may Agni bestow insight, on me offspring, on me splendour. On me may Indra bestow insight, on me offspring, on me strength and so also may Surya (sun) bestow them on me. What thy splendour is, Agni, may I thereby become resplendent. What thy vigour is, Agni, may I become vigorous. What thy consuming power is, Agni, may I thereby obtain consuming power."<sup>1</sup> With these formulas he should approach the fire, bend the knee, embrace the teacher's feet and say to him "Recite The Savithri, Sir recite". At his request, initiates him into the mysteries of the *Sāvitri mantrams*, by uttering into the right ear, the sacred letter (Om) which is known as '*Pranavam*' or the primeval sound from which the whole manifested creation is believed to have developed, and then recite the *gāyitrī mantram* firstly *pada* by *pada* (syllable), then hemistich by hemistich, and finally the whole verse. The boy is then made to recite as far as he is able. The *Guru* then teaches the pupil certain maxims of conduct to be pursued and respected by him throughout his Brahmacharya stage. The boy has now become a Brahman qualified for the study of the Vedas and the performance of all the duties appertaining to the *āśrama* or stage he is about to enter. He must not sleep during the day, but must under the tuition of his *guru* devote his attention to the vedic studies. Advice to this effect, though spoken in sanskrit, at the time, is also given in Malayalam so as to appeal to the understanding of the

young disciple, a custom unknown to the Brahmans of the East Coast. With these words of advice, he is given a *dandu* or stick, and he makes obeisance to his parents and others assembled. He next receives a brass vessel *bhikshapátram* (alms spot) for providing himself with food during the Brahmacharya stage. He goes to the kitchen of his own house with the brass pot in one hand and the stick in the other ; making obeisance in due form to his mother, and while standing facing the east, he says ' Bhavati Bhikshám Dadhatu ' (mayst thou be pleased to give me alms.) The mother places five or seven handfuls of rice in the vessel, and after receiving similar contributions from the others assembled there, he goes to his guru or preceptor and says ' Bhikshamidam ' (this is the collection of my alms) : the guru then blesses it and says ' may it be good '. After the *gayatri* japa, there is a ceremony of *Samidhadhanam* corresponding to the *aupasanam* of the *Grihasta*, and this has to be performed twice both in the morning and after sunset every day. Another *hómam* called *Anupravakaniya* sacrifice i. e., the sacrifice performed after the study of a part of the Veda, takes place during night, for which the boy prepares *Brahmadána* or cooked food and the teacher should sacrifice it to the Savitri, a second time, to the Rishis, a third time, to Agni a fourth time and lastly to the Brahmans who pronounce the end of the vedic study. The cloth that covers the *Krishnajina* and the sacred thread is removed, and the consecration of his food is then performed for the first time.

On the fourth day begins the boy's initiation into the vedas (*Othu thudangal*), and from that time, he leads the life of a Brahmachari or celibate student of the vedas, seeing none but his teacher or guru, and wearing only the *Krishnájina* and the *Mekhalam* till the performance of the *Samavarthana* ceremony which marks the completion of his studies and his return to domestic life (*Grihasta*.) This form of orthodoxy prevails to a great extent unimpaired even to this day in most of the high dignified or aristocratic Nambuthiri families.

*Brahmacharya period* :—The boy's studentship begins immediately after *Upanayanam* and during the whole period of *Brahmacharyam* he is to be with the guru or spiritual father. According to Manu, the period may extend to nine, eighteen or thirty-six years, though in these days, it is much less. During this period he is forbidden to use betel, to wear flowers

in his hair, or to ornament his body or fore-head with sandal. He must rise and bathe early, perform his *sandhyavandhanam* at the three *sandhyás* (sunrise, noon, and sunset), as taught to him during the Upanayanam ceremony, and offer oblation of fuel to the sacred fire (*samidádānam*.) He must abstain from perfumes, pungents, sensuality, wrath, covetousness, dancing, music, gambling, detractions of others, falsehood, impurity of all kinds, and must never injure any being. Till his *Samávarthanam*, or the ceremony of returning home after the course of his studentship, the Nambuthiri youth has to abstain from clothing of all kinds except a small strip of cotton cloth. While a twist of *muncha* grass is tied round the loins, these are renewed as often as is necessary during the prescribed period of *Brahmacharyam*. He must also wear a strap of leather (*Krishnūjinam*) an inch in breadth across his shoulder, and hanging down in the same direction as the sacred thread; and the study of the Vedas forms the important part of the whole course.

*Upanishédam* :—When the above course is completed and at the return of the *Uttarāyanam* period, the rite called *Upanishédam* is performed on any day in the bright lunar fortnight when *Swádhyāham* comes in conjunction with any of the stars from *Káarthikai* to *Visákom*. The usual preliminaries being over, the Brahmachári performs *hómam*, and at the end of it eats what remains of the *havissu* or *Nivediam*. The vow too is undertaken for the whole year.

*Godanam* :—At the close of the Upanishédam vow, the same auspicious day is chosen and after the initiatory ceremonies the Brahmachári, having shaved and bathed performs *homam* and partakes of the remainder of the sacrificial rice. This is continued for twelve days.

*Chukryam* :—After *Gódana Vritam*, an auspicious day is chosen, as during the *Uttarāyanam* period, and wanted preliminaries having been performed, the Brahmachári partakes of the remainder of the sacrificial rice. Before sunset that day, “the *avántara diksha*”, which is a part of this ceremony and is performed, when the Brahmachári, whose eyes are blindfolded, goes through his evening service and fasts during the night. Next morning, he again goes through the daily service and performs the “*avántara diksha*” during which the bandage is removed from his eyes. He does not indulge in a bath for four days consecutively, but keeps himself free from pollution

in the meantime, and partakes once everyday of the sacrificial rice without salt. On the fourth day the rite called "*Avántara*" is performed and the Brahmachari is free to bathe.

*Samávarthanam* :—This is a ceremony by which the youth's studentship is brought to an end. For this an auspicious day is selected when the *Brahmachári* (the vedic student) bathes early before day-break, and goes through his early morning routine (*sandhiavandhanam*). He next performs *Nándimukha* and other preliminary ceremonies and prepares the sacrificial fire (*hómam*) which is fed with the twigs of *Ficus Religiosa*. After parting with the symbols of his Brahmacharya, namely, the string of grass (*mounchi*) round his loins and the waist band which he gives to the *Acharya* (priest) and another Brahman. Getting himself shaved, bathing inside the house in water on which the rays of the sun have not fallen that morning, he dresses and adorns himself in his best with his caste marks, and then brings the propitiation of the sacrificial fire to an end. He remains inside the house throughout the whole day for fear of exposing himself to the sun's rays, and performs the evening service at sunset. Next he gets out of the house and looks at the moon and stars, after which he is said to have passed the stage of *Brahmacharyam*.

This is often indulged in by the Nambuthiris, owing, partly to their desire to have a son to perform funeral and other ceremonies for the spirits of the departed, and partly to dispose of the superfluous number of girls. Two or three girls are married to one man to avoid the payment of heavy sums which are required to get suitable bridegrooms. When a Nambuthiri has several wives, the first wife has no precedence over the others, nor are 'the latter considered as a superior class of concubines like the hand-maids of the Jewish patriarchs'. They are all of equal status, and live amicably in the same house.

Polyandry and widow marriage are absolutely unknown among them.

The Nambuthiri women are kept in the strictest seclusion. Of all virtues, chastity is accounted the highest, and any violation of this, in man or woman, entails loss of caste, social status, and total separation

Polygamy.

Smarthavicharam.

from the family. Enquiries into cases of conjugal infidelity are conducted by the *Smárthan* (judge), and hence the name "*Smárthávicháram*", by which the caste trial is known. Should a woman of the caste misbehave herself, and the matter be known to the members of the family, they do not generally keep the secret to themselves, but the senior or some other male member thereof divulges it to the prominent members among the castemen of the neighbourhood. The latter on receiving the information, proceed to the family and make a careful enquiry into the truth of the matter. If they are satisfied as to her guilt, they direct the suspected woman to be lodged separately for they consider her to be impure. The husband or other member of the family then informs the ruler of the State, who thereupon, at the request of her husband or parents appoints a *Pancháyet* to conduct the *vicháram* (trial) and to issue summons (*Tittu*) to them. The *Pancháyet* consists of the *Smárthan* or president, two or more *Mimámsakars* or Nambuthiris versed in caste-laws the *Agakóyma* or local head of the community, and the *Purakóyma* a representative of the Raja whose duty it is to stand with a drawn sword during the trial and to keep order. The office of the *Smárthan* is hereditary, and if the family to which he belongs becomes extinct, the *Yógam* or the village union nominates another in its place. The *Mimámsakars* are appointed to help the *Smárthan*; the *Agakóyma* whose office is also hereditary, is appointed to preserve order while the *Purakóyma* is the ruler himself. In ancient times, the latter was invariably present. The *Smárthan* on the receipt of the royal mandate, receives from the girl's relations a small *Dakshina* (money gift), and generally proceeds to select the *Mimámsakars*. In the State while there are several *Vaidikans* (caste priests), one of them accompanies a *Smárthan* to the place of *Vichárama* or enquiry, and the *Smárthan* merely conducts the enquiry as the representative of the *Vaidikans*, and is authorised and guided by them.

The proceedings commence with a *pūja* to the local deity after which the trial begins with the examination of the accused's *dási* or maid-servant who incriminates her. The woman remains all the time within the *Anjāmpura*; and the Sudra maid-servant stands at the door. All questions are addressed to her mistress through her; for the suspected woman must be honoured until the pronouncement of the final

verdict. It is curious to note this similarity to the English legal maxim that every man is innocent until he is proved guilty. The Smárthan makes a pretence of entering this flimsy edifice (*anjámpura*), as if ignorant of all that has transpired. The maid-servant steps out and informs him of the presence of her mistress inside; the Smárthan pretending to be astonished at this information, asks her why her mistress should not be in the main building. With this question, the enquiry may be said to have really begun. The next morning by 11 o' clock, the Smárthan and his colleagues again go and stand beside the out-house, and calling out the maid-servant again, begins the regular enquiry. About 5 o' clock in the evening, the Agaköyuna relates the whole day's proceedings to the *Mimámsakars*, and takes their opinions as to the nature of the questions to be put on the following day, and this kind of enquiry lasts often for months and sometimes even for years. It is a very expensive undertaking, for the whole judicatory staff has to be maintained by the family, until the woman confesses her guilt. In the event of her confession, the woman is brought out and minutely cross-examined before all the members of the court, with a view to elicit the names of all the men who have had a share in her offence or who have taken part in her criminal intimacy. In the event of her refusing to do so, the trial is prolonged until she confesses. If the woman is found to be innocent of the charges, the judges perform *Kshama nāmaskāram*, (*i. e.* prostrations begging her pardon for the prosecution).

In former times various means of persuasion are said to have been used; such as the introduction of rats and snakes into the woman's room. After the completion of the enquiry, the guardian of the suspected woman presents himself before the assembled Brahmans and makes the customary obeisance. The Smárthan then recounts the details of the enquiry, and communicates the results thereof to the ruler of the State, who directs the suspected woman as well as the party composing the members of the enquiry to come before him. Again, on a particular day, a formal assembly is held comprising the members already mentioned, together with the ruler of the State. The Smárthan then narrates, in order, the various incidents connected with the enquiry, but delegates to a Brahman who stands outside on a stool, the task of

naming her paramours. As he mentions each name in stentorian tones, a pop-gun is discharged amidst the deafening beating of drums. After all the persons are enumerated, the woman is declared guilty of adultery. The *Pindiyans* or servants at once deprive her of the cloth covering the upper part of her body, and the umbrella with which she has been concealing her face. No longer is the woman a chaste woman (*kula-stri*): she is thenceforward called a *sādhanam* (thing). The Smārthan then advises her to lead the life of a religious recluse, doing penance and growing *tulsi* plants, in the hope that they may redeem her from her future birth. In the event of her willingness to do so, she is maintained at the expense of the State; otherwise she is at liberty to depart with whomsoever she pleases. After she has been handed over by the Smārthan to the custody of the Purakōyma, the guardian of the woman bathes and performs all the funeral ceremonies for her, who from that moment is counted as dead for all social and family purposes. In former times the outcaste Brahman women in the Chirakkal Taluk of North Malabar were handed over to a Tiyyan landlord, (*Mannanár*), of high rank and privileges; and he either had them as his wives, or sold them away when he did not like them. It then remains for her paramours to vindicate their character on pain of excommunication. Two courses are open to them to exculpate themselves either by undergoing the ordeal of boiling oil or of weighing; but these have been long ago abolished.

In the excommunication case of a Brahman woman which took place in the State a few years ago, about 65 men (Brahmans Ambalavasis, and Sūdras), were outcasted. Two leading men in the British territory who were also implicated in it, agreed to undergo the ordeal either of oil or of weighing to prove their innocence, and the Smārthan allowed it and gave them a formal writ called *pampu*. This, however, was considered by the whole community to be an irregular and unwarranted procedure, and was therefore declared null and void. The Smārthan and his colleagues were made to perform some *prāyaschittam* or expiatory ceremony which consisted of the recitation of the *Gāyatri mantrams* thousand times early morning after the usual bath for three years. At the end of three years he was to eat food boiled in *Panchagavyam*. He was to make gift of a hundred cows Rs. (2-8-0) and feed one hundred Brahmans.



The members of his house were also to perform a similar expiatory ceremony.

The seducers, who are placed under a ban, are considered dead in so far as their membership in the family is concerned, and funeral ceremonies are performed for them.

The husband must perform elaborate purificatory and expiatory rites (*práyaschittam*), concluding with a *Sudha-bhojanam*, or feast to celebrate his re-admission into caste, after he has obtained the ruler's permission. The matter does not end even here. The children of the woman by her husband after the commencement of the sinful act, the children of her associates as well as their chaste wives are degraded in caste; and they become Chákkiyars and Nángiyars.

Even after the woman has soiled herself by her conduct, her parents advise her to confess her fault and to suffer the social penalty in this world in order to avoid the divine wrath in the next. The Smárthan takes up the case with a most unbiassed mind, respects the virtue of the woman, and interrogates her and obtains the answers through her maid-servant until the charge is proved. "No harsh word is employed, no shocking word ever suggested; and the whole case is worked to a termination, by a series of mild questions which never fails to bring out the truth. The sinfulness of reading out the charge of adultery to one, who belonged to the purest of the community and who, in this instance, may perhaps be innocent, is avoided by the Brahman judge, and it is read out by a young Tamil Brahman."

The family property of a Nambuthiri is called *Brahmaswum*, and every member thereof has an equal claim to it; but practically it is the eldest son who succeeds to the property of his father, while the junior members are entitled to maintenance. This is in accordance with principle laid down in the two verses 106 and 107 of *Manu Smrithi* that a man's eldest son relieves him of all debt to the manes, and that he is therefore worthy of the whole estate. "As a father supports his sons, so the eldest look after the youngest when they behave towards him as sons, towards their father." This practice and the recognized principle among the Nambuthiris appear to be in consonance with the directions laid down by the law-giver.

It is on this ground that the eldest son alone marries

while his brothers form conjugal-relations with the women of the castes below them. In the latter case, the children of the union belong to the family of the mother, and are supported by the *kāranavan* out of her family funds. If the eldest son is younger than any of his father's brothers, then the latter succeeds to the right of governing the family. If, on the other hand, an elder brother dies leaving an unmarried daughter behind him, the brother junior to him may take a lawful wife to continue the line. If the father dies before the son comes of age, and if there is no adult male to manage the affairs, then it is the eldest female of the house who succeeds to the right. Impartibility is the fundamental principle of the system. Among the *Ammomans*, inheritance is in the female line.

If the senior member of a Nambuthiri family has no legal heirs—neither his own sons, his brothers' sons, nor any near relation—he may adopt heirs in any one of the methods described below, but in the event of his having any heir in the male line, however distant, he is not entitled to exercise the right of adoption. In the latter case, the nearest and the oldest relative must be made to marry, and thus preserve the family continuity. But, if there is no prospect of his brothers getting any issue, and if they should give their consent to the act, then he may adopt with their consent, that of the distant relatives not being required. If the person wishing to adopt, obtains the consent of his brothers, on the ground of the absence of the prospect of their having issue, and adopts one of the distant relatives, the consent of all other relatives, however distant, is necessary. If, under the above conditions, a Nambuthiri adopts a son and afterwards begets a son, the adopted son is entitled to a fifth of his property and the real son to four-fifths. This is allowed according to the common Hindu Law. If, however, necessary formalities, such as the *hómam*, etc., have been gone through, the latter forfeits his claim to the property.

There are three kinds of adoption now in vogue among the Kerala Brahmans. One of these is the *Pattukayyal Dethu*, that is, adoption in which ten hands or five persons, namely, (the parents who give away, the parents who receive and the boy given away) are concerned. If the boy to be adopted belongs to the same *gótra* and *sútra* as the adoptive family, then there is

no limit to the age at which he may be adopted. If he is of a different *gotra*, the adoption should take place before *Upanayanam*. The second form of adoption is the *Chanchamatha* or that in which a dry twig of *Ficus Religiosa*, nine inches long, forms a part. There is no limit to the age of the person to be adopted, and the only ceremony performed on such occasions is the offering of the twig to the God of Fire in the *homakundam* (sacrificial pit). The person thus adopted has to perform the funeral rites of the parent adopting him only and not those of their ancestors.

The third kind of adoption is known as *Kudivechu Illathu Dethu*, in which an only surviving widow or an old widower in a family adopts an heir. This is done by means of one of her relatives, and the family priest or *Vádhyar* who chooses a person from among the relatives, informs the ruler of the fact, and after getting him married, adopts him and his wife, as heirs to the widow or old man. The first two adoptions above referred to are made with a view to performing the funeral rites, while the third kind is resorted to in the absence of close relations; and the person so adopted performs the funeral obsequies of the old man or woman after death and succeeds to his property.

There is also another kind of adoption '*Kanniyodu Kudi Sarvaswadánam*' in which the parents having only a female child give her in marriage to a Brahman with all their property for her dowry and her son must perform for them the usual funeral rite. In fact, her son is treated as their own.

## CHAPTER X.

---

# THE BRAHMANS.

---

### THE NAMBUTHIRIS.

(Continued).

It is the science which treats of heavenly bodies and their influence over human destiny. Ancient  
Jyotisha Sastram or  
Hindu Astrology in-  
cluding Astronomy. Chaldeans, Egyptians and Zoroastrians appear to have cultivated this science in connection with their religious worship; and much of the Hindu Astrology must have been the common property of the early Aryans. For the Zodiacal signs are given the same names; the observation, names of planets, the connotations of their characters and attributes are all similar. The Hindus must have exchanged ideas with the neighbouring nations, and many non-Hindu astrologers such as Yavanáchárya are mentioned in Hindu works on astrology: foreign words such as (Greek) *heli*, *kriya*, *jetuma*, *parthonia*, *kéntram*, *hóra*, *drékúnam* and *kourpi* are also found in them.

Astrology including astronomy or *Jyótisha sástram* is divided into three main divisions, namely, (1) *Siddhánta* or astronomy, which deals with mathematical portion, (2) *Phalita* or judicial astrology, in which predictions are based upon planetary movements, *prasnás* (the questions) for the clearing of doubts and the remedies suggested by it, being included in this division; and (3) *Muhúrtha* or the fixing of auspicious moments for all ceremonies, etc., with a view to lessen the evils and strengthen the benefits.

Mention is made of eighteen astrological works, of which *Súrya siddhánta*, named also as *Súryópanishad*, is the most important. *Jyótisha* is one of the six *angás* (organs) of the *védas*, and to each *véda* a treatise under the title of *Jyótisha* is annexed; and this explains the adjustment of the Calendar for the purpose of fixing the proper periods for the performance of religious duties. It is adapted to the solar and lunar time

with the civil year, and was evidently formed in the infancy of astrological knowledge. The religious life of the Brahmans was one continuous routine of the performance of the ceremonies enjoined by the vedas, (*Shódasa kriyas*) sixteen sacraments, *Yagnas* or sacrifices, *Tharpanàs* or oblations of *sesamum* and water to the manes of the departed, the *Upakarmas*, for which much care and thought were exercised in choosing proper time and seasons; and the spiritual welfare of the community chiefly depended on the proper performance of them, during auspicious moments. *Sradhas* had to be performed in accordance with the rules laid down in this, as otherwise injurious results might result from the selection of inauspicious times. Apart from these religious ceremonies, all speculations in trade, constructions of edifices, etc., depended upon the auspicious times for their commencement. It is said that the military operations of the Pandavas were begun at an auspicious time fixed by the astrologer Sahadeva, one of the Pandavas well versed in the science.

Such auspicious occasions depended upon the movements and position of the planets, such as conjunctions, oppositions, triunes, quadratures, exaltations, etc. The religious ceremonies had to be performed at the two equinoxes and solstices, and the time for them could be determined only by a close observation of the planets and their movements. Great credit is due to the ancients for the advancement of this science under adverse circumstances chiefly owing to the absence of observatories and appliances which modern astronomers possess, though mention is made of some *yantrams* or apparatus in their works.

The real position of the planets in the Zodiac are of importance in connection with the selection of *muhúrthams* (auspicious moments), and in judicial astrology the apparent position of the planets has to be taken into account, and a correction is therefore applied to the mean positions called *Bijábalams*.

The astronomical portion was first developed by correct observations and exact mathematical calculations. The ancients recognised only seven heavenly bodies as of any practical value in the process, together with the two nodes of the moon. They are the Sun, the Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn, Rahu, the ascending node, and Kéthu, the descending

node, and these are called the *Navagrahams* or nine planets. The nodes are also elevated to the rank of planets, although they are devoid of any corporeal existence. In order to fix the relative position of the planets they felt the necessity of a meridian in reference to which all reckonings had to be made. The town of Lanka, according to Puranic accounts and traditions, was the seat of an observatory, and was therefore selected as the starting point owing to its situation at the Equator. The city which is now submerged, was in the days of its glory, the capital of a large empire, and is on the same meridian with Dhandakāranya Ujain and Kurukshétra. What Greenwich is to the modern astronomers, Lanka and Ujain were to ancient astronomers, who were credited with a profound knowledge of Algebra, Geometry and Trigonometry, both plain and spherical. The results of ancient calculations, when tested by modern methods, do not appear to differ materially, and the calculations of one astronomer were verified and corrected by others. Thus all sources of error, as far as human genius, unaided by mechanical means, could do, were eliminated. About the sixth or seventh century a great astronomer Arya Bhatta, not satisfied with the results and methods in the eminent work already referred to, wrote a similar work called *Arya siddhānta*, and the two works are now recognized as authorities on the subject.

For purposes of calculations, the Zodiac is divided into twelve equal parts called *Rāsis* or signs, each of which is again divided into thirty *Bhāgas* or degrees. One degree is equal to 60 minutes and one minute to 60 seconds, each of which again is divided in sixty parts. Ancient astronomers made allowance for the precession of the Equinoxes, and variations in latitude and longitude, and correctly ascertained the reclinations and right ascensions. They were also acquainted with the direct and retro-grade movements of the planets, and obliquity of the eclipses. Nothing that could be observed had escaped their notice, and they were able to note the apparent and real position of the planets at any given movement and for any given place. They gave correct forecasts of solar and lunar eclipses, their commencement, duration and other particulars.

The second division of Hindu astrology was clearly an after-growth, for there is no distinct mention of this science in the *Āṇḍas*. Though astrology is regarded as a Vedāṅga, yet it is

open to doubt whether the application of the word was comprehensive enough to include judicial astrology. When astronomy had made fair progress among the ancient Hindus, the calculations and results thereof were used to foretell events relating to the career of men. Like other contemporary nations the ancient Hindus clearly comprehended the inter-dependence of the various planets of the solar system and the natural influence they shed upon one another for good or for evil. For instance, the moon affects the earth vitally, and regulates the tides of the oceans. The sun which is the source of all life and energy affects the motion of the earth. If these distant bodies could affect the earth in mass, they could as well affect the living being on it. Concerning this Mr. Suryanarayana Row says, "Man is the result of previous forces working under definite laws, with local modifications as are found to be necessary in each individual case. His physical constitution is under the direct influence of the sun, because the seed that produces him, the bed in which he is nourished, the food with which he is fed, the clothing he wears, the water he drinks, and the air he breathes, are the result of the sun's rays working in Nature in their own inscrutable ways. His brain cells and his nervous system are greatly affected by the time, place, seed, food, climate and other conditions of his life; and his intellect is entirely dependent on the quantity and quality of the brain cells derived from those sources. Vision would be worse than useless if there had been no light, and so also his other senses each of which has been made to work under the direct influence of a particular planet. All the planets shine by light borrowed from the sun, and while retaining some of their power, they add something of their own and thus influence mankind in various ways."

"As the rain drops are affected by the nature of the soil they fall upon, and are influenced by its properties, so also the planets, though shining by borrowed lights, shed influence peculiar to their own. The moon exercises great influence over us, and affects our minds considerably. Lunatics, idiots, and mad men exhibit marked changes on full-moon and new-moon days. Sick people always pass restless nights before new-moon days, and they are seriously ill; every one despairs of their life, until they pass the new-moon days. Electricity has been declared to be the great physical agent, which pervades

through the whole universe, and is the cause of the production of the strangest phenomena. The intellect of man is nothing but a result of the nervous currents which pass through the human frame, and which, when largely concentrated, form what is called the mind or will-power. Whatever will might be, it cannot remain any length of time unaffected by its surroundings, and the food and the climate are important factors in the determination of our mind or will force. Will is therefore under the direct influence of the sun's light and heat, and might have been called into existence by their combined chemical action. The greater the influence of the sun, the greater is the nervous energy or will force in man".

The Sun, shining with his millions and billions of rays, affects our bodies, our minds, and our prospects in life. He makes man courageous or timid, as he sheds a greater or less influence on the person in question. In entering the human body, the solar rays are not uniform in their effects. In some organs they produce health, while in others, they produce disease. The chemical effects of the refracted solar rays are different in different parts, and the minutest surface exposed to the solar rays has as much power of refraction as the huge sky when we witness the appearance of the rain-bow. *Herein* lies the secret of planetary influences. They fall on the bodies, they affect their colour, they change their constitution, producing health or disease, and make them pursue a certain path which may or may not be to their advantage. All the influences above explained come directly from the sun, and we are entirely subject to them. In fact, we could not have taken our present existence, if it had not been for his universal influence.

A course of observations, and reasoning, supplemented by the faith in reincarnation, led astrologers to the inevitable conclusion, that the planetary positions in the Zodiac at the time of birth of each human being indicated the nature of his or her career.

Starting from this hypothesis the elaborate science of *Phalabhāga* or judicial astrology was constructed, and the lordship of the signs of the Zodiac was assigned to the planets according to the following scheme. The Sun had the sign of Leo for his house, the Moon had Cancer, Mars Aries, and Scorpeo, Mercury Gemini and Virgo; Jupiter Sagittari, Pisces; and



Saturn ruled over Capricorn and Aquarius. The deities presiding over these planets had their ranks determined for them. The sun and the moon were the overlords or kings. Mercury next in rank was the heir apparent. Venus below mercury was in charge of the temporal affairs of the solar system. Mars graded below Venus, was entrusted with the command of the army. Then came the spiritual adviser Jupiter and lastly the menial servant Saturn. Planets again are divided into two classes according to the character of the influence they exercise—the benefics and malefics. Waxing moon, Venus and Jupiter are benefics, while the waning Moon, Sun, Mars and Saturn are malefics.

The position and aspects of the benefics are believed to do good to the subject, while the reverse is the case in regard to malefics. The Zodiac is further divided into twelve parts for purposes of judicial astrology, and these divisions unlike the signs are of variable dimensions. The rising sign at the birth of a person or a part thereof is the *Lagna* or the first division of the horoscope. This is the first house, and all about the physical constitution of the individual is determined by the examination of the house and its occupants. The second house treats of the family and maternal side, wealth, dependants, eyes, and face. The third house is examined to learn about the brothers, energy, etc. The fourth house deals with the physical and mental happiness of the person, vehicles, dwellings, mother, etc. Predictions about the offspring, results of past *Karmas*, education, etc., are made after the examination of the fifth house. The sixth house treats of the enemies, diseases, and debts. The seventh deals with marriage and conjugal felicity or otherwise. Death, defeat, sickness and affliction are associated with the eighth house, and all deductions concerning the spiritual life of the person are made from the ninth house. The tenth house treats of the respectability, character of the occupation, influence of the man, in short, all his worldly greatness. The eleventh house deals with acquisitions of all kinds, and the twelfth, losses of all kinds. Thus, the horoscope of the man deals in this manner with all phases of human life according as these houses and their lords are powerful or otherwise, well or ill combined, well or ill aspected.

Different rules are given for determining the potency of the planets at various times. After giving a general account

of the horoscope in this manner, the astrologer proceeds to ascertain the order and duration in which each planet governs the life of an individual. Different systems are explained in the treatises current, the prevalent method being the system called the *Nakshútradesa*. According to this scheme, the Sun's period is six years, the Moon's ten years, Rahu's eighteen years, Jupiter's sixteen years, Saturn's nineteen years, Mercury's seventeen years, Kétu's seven years, and last of all Venus, twenty years. The maximum duration of a man's life is calculated to be one hundred and twenty years. The *dasa* of the same planet does not start the cycle of all the persons. A person born in the asterism of *Aswathi* begins his career under the influence of Kétu. Another born in the asterism of Bharani has the *dasa* of Venus at birth. When the first *dasa* and the period are settled, the above order of *dasas* and their respective periods follow in regular succession. By the examination of these *dasas* the character of a man's career in particular periods of his life is known. Another branch of judicial astrology is called *Prasnam*. Here the astrologer is consulted in reference to some particular matter, such as the health of a person, theft, remedy for demoniacal attacks, a contemplated enterprise or a projected journey, and his decision is called for. He does not consult the horoscope of the querant, but a Zodiacal diagram is drawn with all the planets in their respective positions at the time in question. From the *Rásichakram* not of the person, but of the moment in consultation, the question is answered. This then is a brief sketch of astrology as practised by the Hindus.

Thus from time immemorial astrology was in high favour with the Brahmans, and in the commentaries of Bhattolpala on *Brihat Játaka*, it is said that the Brahmans alone could learn astrology and practise it as an art. Owing to its being a *Védanga*, members of other castes were not allowed to learn and practise so sacred a science.

The Nambuthiris in Malabar had in former times paid unusual attention to the study of this sacred and interesting subject of Astronomy, including astrology, and have compiled the following most authoritative works on the subjects:—(I) *Desadhyái* is an important and elaborate commentary on the first ten chapters of Varáha Mahira's *Hora sastra* by Thalakkalathur

Bhattathiri.<sup>1</sup> (II) Kelallur Neelakanda Chomáthiri (Somayaji, one who has performed the Soma sacrifice), has written the following works :—

- (1) *Arya Bhattiya Bhashya*—a commentary on Arya Bhatta.
- (2) *Tantra Samgraha*—a treatise on computation.
- (3) *The Grahana Nirnaya*—a work dealing with the determination of eclipses.

III. Pudumana Chomathiri has written a work on the *Mánasa Ganitha* or mental calculation.

IV. Mazhamangalathu Nambuthiri has compiled a very important work called *Káladipika*, or lamp of times. There are besides many minor works, text books on *Muhúrthas*, (divisions of time), *Prasna* (astrological enquiry), *Játhaka* (horoscope) and *Ganitha* (calculations).

Thalakalathur Bhattathiri became an outcaste by an accident. He rendered into Malayalam many of the Sanskrit works above referred to for the use of low caste Hindus.

From this it would appear that Brahmans' domestic life is closely connected with the rules of astrology, and no action, calculated to bring in a good result, is commenced without consulting its dictates.

Gargi says that a king without a competent court astrologer is like a man without manhood, and that the village or town which does not contain a good astrologer should not be inhabited by sensible men. At present there are very few among the Nambuthiris, who are good astrologers, but there are many among the Kshatriyas, Ambalavaśis, Sudras, Izhuvans and Kaniyans. There is not a single village which does not contain at least one astrologer. Thus, an astrologer is an indispensable factor in the family and social organization of the Hindus in Malabar, Cochin and Travancore.<sup>2</sup>

For the performance of the following important ceremonies the auspicious days are selected as given below :—

*Marriage Ceremonies (viváham)*—(a) Auspicious times :—

- (1). Lunar Months; Káarthika (November-December), Margasira (December-January), Magha (January-February), Phalguna (March-April), Vaisákha (April-May).

1. Vide pages 186-188, Cochin Tribes and Castes, Vol. I.

2. Vide Kaniyans, Chapter XI, pages 188-208, Cochin Tribes and Castes, Vol. I.

(2). Days of asterism :—Moolam, Aswathi, Anorádha, Mrigasirsha, Róhini, Hasta, Mággha, Oothra, Oottaráshada, Oottarabhadra.

(b) Inauspicious times :—The last five days of a month (*Riktathithies*), Shasti, Ashtami, Vyathipatha, Vydruthi. The seventh house from the marriage Lagna should be without planets. Venus must not be in the sixth house and Mars should be avoided in the eighth house.

*Nishékam or Nuptials* :—(a) Auspicious times—(1) Sra-  
vana, Róhini, Hasta, Anorádha, Swáti, Raivati, Moola, Oottara,  
Oottarashada, Oottarabhadra, Sathabhisha.

2. The Rasis; Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo,  
Libra, Aquarius, Pisces, Sagitarius.

(b) Inauspicious days :—The fourth, sixth, eighth, thir-  
teenth, fourteenth and fifteenth of a lunar month; Sunday,  
Tuesday, and Saturday.

*Pregnancy Ceremony* :—(a) Auspicious days; Monday,  
Wednesday, Thursday, Friday.

The first, second, third, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth,  
tenth, eleventh; thirteenth day after full or new moon, Aste-  
risms Pushya and Sravana and all the Lagnás (signs of the  
Zodiac) with the exception of Mithuna.

*Simanthonayana* :—Auspicious times : (1) The first, se-  
cond, third, fifth, seventh, tenth, eleventh and thirteenth day  
after full or new moon.

(2) Asterisms :—Róhini, Pushya, Hasta, Punarvasu,  
Uttara, Uttarashada, Sravana, Révati, Mrigasirsha and all  
Lagnás with the exception of Leo and Scorpeo.

*Námakarna* : (Naming ceremony) Auspicious times :—Days  
of asterisms, viz., Anorádha, Punarvasu, Oottaráshada, Oottara-  
bhadra, Satha-Bhisha, Swáti, Dhanishta, Sravana, Rohini,  
Aswini, Mrigasirsha, Revathi, Hasta, Pushyami, in fixed signs,  
when the eighth house is clean and without a planet on Friday,  
Wednesday, Thursday, Monday or Tuesday.

*Annaprásana* (giving rice to the child for the first time) :  
The days of asterism Punarvasu, Mrigasirsha, Dhanishta,  
Pushyami, Hasta, Swáti, Aswini, Anorádha, Sravana, Sata-  
bhisha, Oottara, Oottaráshada, Oottarabhadra, Chaitra.

All the lunar days except the fourth, sixth, eighth, ninth,  
twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth are good. The

tenth house from the *Lagna* (the feeding sign) should be without any planet.

*Vidhyárambham* (Commencement of education) :—Auspicious days : Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday.

The days of asterisms : Aswini, Punarvasu, Hastam, Chittira, Swáti. Anorádha, Jaista, Révati, Sravana.

Lunar days :—First, second, third, fourth, fifth, seventh, tenth, eleventh, twelfth and the thirteenth day. The eighth house from the *Lagna* should be clean without a planet.

*Upanayanam* : (Investiture of holy thread) :—Auspicious times : Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday.

Days of Asterisms :—Aswini, Rohini, Mrigasirsha, Punarvasu, Swáti, Anoradha, Oottarashada, Sravana, Dhanishta, Pushyami, Révati.

The signs :—Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Virgo, Libra and Pisces.

Planets in the eighth house should be scrupulously avoided with the sun and Mars in the twelfth house and malefics and in kendras. This important ceremony should be always done before noon.

*An Illustrative Horoscope.*—The following diagram is the horoscope of a man who was born on the 25th November 1862 A. D. which corresponds to the 12th of the Solar month *Scorpeo* at about 45-50 *ghatikas* after sunrise. The combinations of the planets at the time of birth are thus located.

..	Rahu	Saturn	..	..	..	Mer- cury	Ketu
..	Rasee		..	Jupiter	Navamsa		Moon Saturn
Moon Jupiter			birth	..			Mars
Mars	Sun Venus	Mer- cury Ketu	..	Rahu	..	Birth sun	Venus

At the time of birth the constellation *Sravana* ruled with a balance of the major period of moon for ten months and eighteen days. The position of the moon and jupiter has to be noticed : the former occupies his own *Navámsa* and the latter is in *Kumbham*. The combination of the moon with

Jupiter produces what is called *Késari yóga*. He rises to a high position by industry, intelligence and devotion to his work.

The position of Mars and Saturn in the fifth house from birth (Lagna) and Chandra (moon) respectively, gives rise to the loss of many children.

Venus (Sukra) is between two malefics Mars (Kujan) and Kétu and that of the debilitated Navamsa and this position predicts the loss of his first wife and the marriage of a second one. The position of Venus in the Navamsa should also be noticed. The constellation of *Sravana* makes him rich, learned and famous. Ravi or sun in scorpio makes him adventurous reckless and cruel. Kujan (Mars) in *Sagattari* makes him a minister to a king or chief and fearless.

Ravi (sun) in the fourth house from Lagna (birth), and moon in the sixth predict his success in life and intelligence. Kujan (Mars) in the fifth house foretells the possession of a few children. Budhan (Mercury) in the third house makes him cruel and Jupiter in the sixth witty and humourous. Sukra (Venus) in the fourth and Manna in the tenth house, prognosticate popularity, learning, magistracy, pilgrimage to the Ganges and other holy waters. Ráhu in the ninth and Kétu in the third, predict the possession of a few children, adventure, popularity and wealth.

Thus for every child at birth, the time is noted to ascertain the positions of planets, and horoscopes are cast by the local astrologers for a small remuneration.

Mantrams are, strictly speaking, divinely inspired vedic texts, and are generally used as prayers or invocations to deities with definite meanings and applications attached to words, which, if properly uttered and repeated according to certain rules of phonetics, cannot fail to produce the expected results. They are supposed to possess in themselves mystic powers capable of producing every conceivable good to oneself or evil to one's enemies.

It has been said that the Brahmans have to study the *Védas* and practise religious and other rites ordained by the *Srutis* and *Grihya Sutrás*; and a proper performance of them with the recital of the vedic texts or *mantrams* which are only prayers addressed to certain deities, is calculated to bring benefits to the performer and his family, while his indifference

or negligence tends to their ruin. Besides the deities mentioned above, there are others of an intermediate class presiding over multifarious maladies, and others again, known as demons, spirits, mischievous imps and fiends which are ever inclined to do harm to mankind, and should therefore be propitiated with meditations (*japams*), *homam* (incantation), *tharpanam* and food to Brahmans which are supposed to compel them to obey the commands of the exorciser. In ancient times Kerala was believed to have been full of these elementals, and tradition refers to Parasurama as having, for the protection of the people, imparted the mysteries of magic or *mantravádam* to the members of two old Nambuthiri families, Kallur and Kattumadam. The former are versed in *Sanmantrams* to be used for good purposes, while the latter are learned in *Durmantrams*—evil mantrams or black art to be used for evil purposes. The members of these families still practise magic as ordained by the great Brahman Warrior.

Only Brahmans are allowed to study and practise the magic of the higher order though professional magicians abound in all castes. Such persons are in constant demand in Hindu families. For, every malady or distress which cannot be rightly diagnosed, is attributed to some one of these supernatural agencies, probably a spirit of the departed male or female, hovering about the house or village and having possessed the patient. The nature of the malady and the particular spirit afflicting the patient is divined by the astrologer, and the magician is invited to exorcise him.

The deities to be propitiated are of two classes, the *Sanmurthis* or benevolent deities who are capable of doing good, and *Durmurthis* or malevolent ones who are ever inclined to do harm. To the former belong Vigneswara, Subramania, Anjanéya, Narasimha and Bhagavati; and to the latter, Kuttichathan, the spirit of the departed, Prëthas and other mischievous imps. Each deity has to be invoked by a special *mantram* which to be effective has to be repeated a number of times, generally 1,00,000, and the magician acquires the necessary powers of success in his art.

The best known popular works dealing with the subject are (1) Prapanchasaram, (2) Prayógasaram, (3) Sárada-tilakam, (4) Mantrasaram, (5) Yantrasáram and (6) Balikalpam. The professional magicians are not learned in these works,

but they obtain their knowledge or training in the subject from a *Guru* or preceptor or by transmission from a long line of ancestors by a strict observance of the ceremonials with implicit faith in their efficacy coupled with the advice already referred to.

Mantrams have always to be repeated after proper understanding, and their significance is of so much importance as the magical force and sound. Every *mantram* appeals to a deity or *dévata* and is connected with a *Rishi*. The proper recitation of it depends upon a certain rule of metre *chandas*. Their efficacy is greatly enhanced when used on auspicious days, at particular times and seasons. They should be repeated in the month of Chaitra for valour, in Vaisákha for jewels, in Mágha for intelligence, on Sundays for wealth, on Mondays for tranquility, on Tuesdays for long life. All intercalary months should be avoided. By the aid of mantrams even Gods can be brought under control.

Mantrams are divided into four classes:—(1) Mantrasára or the essence of magic includes all mantrams with their efficacy for good or evil, and the method of learning or reciting them with the aid of the *Guru* (preceptor). *Mantrams* are combinations of the five initial letters of the five sacred elements which produce sounds, but not words. These are believed to vibrate on the ether, and act on latent forces which are there. (2) Yantrasára includes all cabalistic figures, and the method of drawing and using them, and objects to be attained by them. They are drawn on thin plates of gold; silver, copper or lead. The efficacy of the figures, when drawn on gold, will, it is said, last for a century, while those drawn on the less precious metals will be effective only for six months or a year. Leaden plates are made use of when the *mantrams* have to be buried underground. These figures should possess the symbols of life, eyes, tongue, the eight cardinal points of the compass, and the five elements.

Prayogasara includes attraction or summoning by enchantment, driving out evil spirits, *Oochatanam* (exorcism), *Stambanam* (stupefaction), *Vasiam* (tempting or bringing a deity or evil spirits under control), *móhanam* (entice ment as for love), (*máranam* destruction) and *Vidveshanam* (separation of friends.) The *mantrams* are effective only when the individual who resorts to them is pure in mind and body.



This can be attained by the recital of *Agapagayathri* (216, exhalations and inhalations) in twenty-four hours.

In this connection, *Bijas* are the mystical letters or the syllables invented for the sake of brevity to denote their root (*Múla*) or the essential part of such *mantras* or the name of the deity to whom it may be addressed or some part of the body over which that deity presides. For example, *Am* is said to denote Siva, *U* Vishnu, *Hrim* the Sun, *Lam* the earth, *Nam* the mind, *Dham* the tongue, and the Goddess Bhuvanewari, *Nam both* the Goddess Annapurna, *Gum* (Guru) and the nose and palm and the ear, etc.

These have to be divided among the deities Ganésa Bramha, Vishnu, Rudra, Jivathma, Paramathma, and the Guru in the proportion of 600, 6,000, 6,000, 6,000, 1,000, 1,000, 1,000. A man can become learned in *mantrams* by the regular performance of the recognised ceremonial, by learning them from a *Guru*, by proper recital of them, burning the sacred fire (*Homams*) and giving food to Brahmans and *Tharpanam* (oblations of water) to deities, *beli* (sacrifice).

Tantrasara or the science of symbolical acts with or without words:—1. For a yantram to be efficacious the following method is recommended. As examples of yantrams the following may be cited. In a room specially selected for the purpose, the Yantram connected with the deity is drawn on the floor; in the centre of which is placed a clean bell-metal lamp which is lighted. Sixteen kinds of *pujas* are performed for the deity who is supposed to dwell in the lamp. Close to this is also placed a gold leaf three inches square, and on this is inscribed the diagram with the mystic letters. After necessary *pujas* for a number of days during which the deity is believed to reside in it, the gold leaf rolled and preserved in a small metallic cylinder may be worn round the neck or the loin by tying it to a piece of thread. A man or woman under a demoniacal attack may be made to sit by the side of the lamp, when the exorciser by his *jabam* (meditation) or incantation drives out the devil. This is then followed by an invocation of the goddess to quit the lamp.

12. There are various methods of neutralising the effect of mantrams used by another magician or *mantravadi* for the destruction or humiliation of others. The difficulty is to find out the exact *mantra* which is employed for one injury; and

having selected the proper one, every such *mantram* is rendered powerless by uttering it with one's face, bending over a vessel full of milk and then swallowing the milk after inscribing the *Yantram* on the leaf of a banyan tree and throwing it into a river. The following are some of the very important yantrams which are used by magicians (*mantravadies*.)

1. Yantrams—Ganapathy Yantram. This should be drawn on a gold leaf, and Ganapathy, the presiding deity, propitiated. It is then enclosed in a metal cylinder and tied round the neck of a female or the loin of a man by means of a thread. It will cure diseases, conquer enemies, or entice any one. If the sacred fire is kept up while the formula is repeated, and dry cocoanut, plantain fruits, money, ghee, parched rice and sweet bread put into the fire; the performer will be blessed with wealth and prosperity.

2. Bhadrakáli Yantram :—The figure is drawn on the floor with flour of rice, turmeric, charcoal powder, and leaves of the castor oil plant, and if *puja* as mentioned above is done at night to the deity, it will lead to the acquisition of knowledge, strength, freedom from disease, and impending calamities, wealth and prosperity. If the *puja* is celebrated by a Mantravadi for 12 days with his face turned towards the south, it will produce the death of an enemy.

3. The utterances of a certain mantram and recital of *Purushasooktham* a vedic hymn), before 11 A. M., and the distribution of milk among children will produce increase of children, wealth, cows and prosperity. If butter is taken by barren women, with the recital of this *mantram*, they will be blessed with children.

4. Sudarsana yantram, when drawn on a metal sheet, and enclosed in a cylinder worn round the neck or on the arm, will relieve those who are ill or possessed of devils. For driving out devils an oblation to Agni must be offered, while the mantram "On nama Suhasrahan pul" is uttered. If the Sudarsana yantram is drawn on butter spread on a plantain leaf, *puja* performed, and the butter given to a barren woman, there will be no danger to herself or future issue.

5. Sarabha yantram will cure men from epilepsy or intermittent fever, while Subramania yantram drawn and regularly

worshipped will expel devils from both those attacked by them, and from houses.

6. Hanuman yantram when worn will protect those who are out on dark nights, and produce bodily strength and wisdom. If drawn on a gold leaf, enclosed in a casket, and *puja* performed to it every Saturday, it will bring prosperity and help pregnant women during their confinement.

7. *Suthaka dohosham* yantram.—Children under one year of age are supposed to be affected, if they are seen by a woman on the fourth day of menstruation with wet clothes and empty stomach after bathing. She may not ever see her own baby or husband till she has changed her clothes and taken food. To avert the evil a waist band, made of the bark of *arka* plant (*calotropis gigantea*), is worn.

8. Pakshi yantram.—If drawn on a sheet of lead, and kept in several places round a house, will keep snakes away.

9. Moolatrigona yantram if drawn on the floor and a knife placed on it will drive out devils, from those attacked thereby.

10. Vatuga Bhirava yantram cures disease in those who are under eighteen years of age, and drives out all kinds of evil spirits. If ashes are smeared on the face, and the *mantram* uttered sixteen times, it will be very effective.

11. Varāti yantram is very useful to any one who wishes to kill an enemy. He should sit in a retired spot at night, with his face turned towards the south, and repeat the *mantram* a thousand times for twenty days.

12. Prathingiri yantram is drawn on a sheet of lead and buried at a spot over which a person, whose death is desired will come to pass. It is then placed on the floor on which the sacred fire is kindled. The *mantram* should be repeated eight hundred times for seven nights.

13. Cāhmundi and Raktha Chāmundi yantrams are used for causing the death of enemies. The *mantram* should be written on a sheet of lead and *puja* performed, with the sacrifice of toddy and mutton.

14. To produce an ulcer which will cause the death of an enemy in ninety days, a *mantram* is written on a piece of cadjan (palm leaf) enclosed in an egg with a small quantity of earth on which he has urinated and buried in an ant-hill. A fowl is also killed and its blood and some toddy are poured over the egg. To cure fever, the formula is written with the

finger in water contained in a basin and the appropriate words repeated while the water is being drunk.

15. A charm called the Aswárúda yantram enables a person wearing it to cover long distances on horseback; and he can make the most refractory horse amenable by tying it round its neck.

Sakti is worshipped in various manifestations in the form of Goddesses and a special yantram is made in the worship of each of them. The ordinary yantram is one which is sometimes placed in the centre of a lotus diagram; and the Bijaksharas belonging to the Goddess are inscribed a certain number of times on each petal.

The Sri chakra or holy circle is described in a diagram of the kind, and is then worshipped. It is supposed to represent the orb of the earth, nine triangles being drawn within the circle to denote the nine continents. In the centre is the drawing of the mouth, which is believed to typify the female energy *Sakti* presiding over the circle. According to some authorities even the orthodox Sankara Acharya must have been a Sakti worshipper. He is known to have placed representation of it in each of the four monasteries founded by him.

## CHAPTER XI.

# THE BRAHMANS.

### THE NAMBUTHIRIS.

(Continued).

Nambuthiris are the true védic Brahmans, and are non-sectarian in religion. Their religion may be described as being bound up in the bundle of their every day experience. More than in any other sect of the *Brahma* is, religion is their constant companion ; and every incident, every circumstance, and every operation in their *illams* (houses) is subject to the most minute religious canons. An idea of them can be gathered from the daily religious routine of an orthodox Nambuthiri.

An orthodox Nambuthiri must rise from his bed before sunrise, *i. e.*, before half past four and six o'clock to begin his 'diurnal course of ceremonial observances', his first important act being to answer the calls of nature, and then to clean his teeth for both of which elaborate rules have been laid down, and any violation of them will lead to the forfeiture of the whole merit of the day's religious acts.<sup>1</sup> He ought properly to clean his teeth with a leaf or two of a mango tree. All *Brahmachàris* (vedic students), widows, and those under a vow must use only these for cleaning their teeth, but married men (*Grihastas*) may, for this purpose, resort to rice-bran burned and reduced to charcoal. It must be noted, in this connection, that while the twigs of the sacred fig tree (*vata*), of the thorny plant Baval (babul), and the nimba or the Nim are recommended for Brahmans in general, the Nambuthiri is ordained to use the mango leaf abundantly found in his own garden. Married men are forbidden to clean their teeth on *Ekàdesi* (eleventh day after full or new moon), *Sankrantis* (first days of the month), *Sradha* days, *Pàrvana* days, and on Sundays, when they have to rinse their mouths twelve times.

The next important religious act of the day is bathing (*snàna*) which should be done in some sacred stream, but in

---

1. Sankara Smriti, Chap. IV, verses 1-42.

the absence of a river, he may bathe in a tank in his own compound. He should wash his dress and then his feet three times with and without a handful of earth. He should next perform *áčhamana* (sipping water), and then plunge in water three times, and again perform the *áčhamana*. This sipping of water is a requisite introduction of all rites; without which says the *Sám̐ba Purána*, all acts of religion are in vain. All persons remove the water by rubbing the head first with a towel, but a *Grihasta* should rub the back of the body first, a *Brahmachari* may begin with any part of the body. A *snátaka* (one fit to marry), a *Sanyasi*, an *Agnihótri*, a *Dikshitan* (one that has performed a *Yágam* or sacrifice) must begin to rub first the ears eyes, heart, throat, respectively, and dip the wet cloth in water before rubbing the other parts of the body. The tuft of hair on the head (*sikha bandham*) must be tied either before or after covering exposure with a strip of cloth. Here again it must be noted that while other classes of Brahmans have their plunge bath in water with a loin cloth and another piece of cloth for rubbing, the Nambuthiri has his bath without any loin dress, but with only an under-cloth (*kaupinam*). While the former dresses himself in the orthodox fashion, the latter is either completely nude or has his *komanam* (a strip of cloth to cover exposure). There are four kinds of bath prevailing among the Brahmans, in general, namely, (1) *Brahmam* (sprinkling of water on the body with the recital of mantrams), (2) *Vayávyam* (rubbing the body with earth), (3) *Agnéyam* (rubbing the body with holy ashes), and (4) *Várunam* (plunge bath). The last only is sanctioned in Kerala by Parasurama.<sup>1</sup> If a Nambuthiri is ill and cannot bathe to become pure to perform a ceremony, the bathing can be done only by proxy. If another Nambuthiri bathes seven times after touching him each time, the latter becomes as pure as if he himself has bathed.

The pious Nambuthiri completes all the preliminary acts and purifications above described, and proceeds to the regular morning service called (*Prátha Sandhya*), performed at the junction of day and night. This varies according to the particular branch of the vedas to which the Nambuthiri belongs and also according to the immemorial traditions and customs of his family. There is, however, no excuse for the omission of it, however much it may differ in detail. The first and usual act

1. Sankara Smrithi Chap. IV, verses 1-42.

preliminary to all Hindu religious rites, is *achamanam* (sipping water), three mouthfuls being taken in for internal ablution with no such recital of the names of Achuta, Anantha and Govinda, as is prevailing among the other classes of Brahmans. The water is taken up in the hollow palm of the right hand or poured into the palm from a spoon, and is supposed to cleanse body and soul in its downward course. This is done three times at the commencement of the morning Sandhya.

Then the next division of the ceremonial is called *Mārjana* (sprinkling). It is a kind of self baptism performed by the worshipper himself by sprinkling water on the head, while the three first verses of the Rig Veda, Chap. x. 9, are recited. It may thus be translated:—

“O! Ye Apas (waters), All pervading divine currents, since you are the source of pleasure, help us therefore by giving us energy so that we may feel the mighty sound.”

“That essence of yours which is most auspicious, give us a share of that here. Like loving mothers pour on us your blessing O! Waters, we approach you for all our sins to be destroyed, give us strength to cope with sin.<sup>1</sup>

Then follows a second performance of *Mārjana* (sprinkling), and a repetition of all the nine verses of the Rig Veda, of which the first three verses had been previously recited.

All the ceremonials up to this point are supposed to precede the actual appearance of the sun above the horizon. The worshipper now prepares to render homage to the rising luminary by what is called *Arghya-dhānā*, for which the worshipper should stand towards the east, recite the *Gāyitri mantrams*, offer water or throw it into the air from the two open hands hollowed and joined together with the sacred thread (*Yagnōpavita*) put round the two thumbs. *Gāyitri* is invoked in these words “Thou art light, thou art seed; thou art immortal life, thou art called effulgent, beloved by the gods, defamed by none, thou art the holiest of sacrifices.”

After this he offers water in the same manner to the *Dévas*, to the *Rishis* (sages) and to the *Pitris*. This is the *Tarpana* ceremony which is a triple act which consists in the offerings of water for refreshment to the gods, sages and fathers. It is divided into three parts; in the first part *Déva*

1. The Daily Practice of the Hindus by Srisa Chandra Vasu. page 85

*Tarpana* 'refreshing of the gods,' the sacred thread is worn over the left shoulder and under the right arm, the worshipper being then called *Upaviti*. Water is taken up in the right hand and poured out over the straightened fingers. In the second part of the *Tarpana* service called *Rishi-tarpana*, the sacred thread is worn round the neck like a necklace, the worshipper being then called *Niviti*. The water is then offered so as to flow over the palm between the root of the thumb and fore-finger, the finger being bent inwards. The worshipper now changes the position of his sacred thread, and placing it over the right shoulder and under the left arm (being then called *Práchína viti* makes offerings of water to the *Acharyas* or inspired religious teachers. This is called *Achúrya Tarpana* and is regarded as supplementary to the *Rishi Tarpana*.)

The third division of the *Tarpana* ceremony is called *Pitre-Tarpana*—refreshing of the father or progenitors. The thread is worn over the right shoulder as in the *Acharya Tarpana*, but the water is poured out over the side fingers of the palm opposite to the root of the thumb. The words muttered are, "Let the fathers be refreshed, let this water containing *tila* (sisamum) be intended for all who live in the seven worlds as far as the abode of Brahma, the seventh world, though they exceed many millions of families. Let the water be consecrated by my sacred thread, be accepted by those members of our family who have died without sons."¹ This *Tarpana* ceremony is performed sometime before the *Sandhya Vandhana* or morning prayer.

Next comes the regular *Gayitri Japa* or the recital of the *Gáyitri mantra* 1008 times. This is sometimes reduced to 108 times till the rising of the Sun, *Pranavam*—AUM. is first recited 101 times and then *Vyáhritis*, after which the recital of the *gáyitri* follows :—

The second act in the meditation is called *Pránayamam* (exercise or regulation of breath). This includes three distinct operations, viz., " (1) *Réchaka*, which consists in first pressing in the right nostril with the thumb and expelling the breath through the left and *vice versa*, (2) *Pûraka*, which consists in first pressing in the right nostril with the fore-finger, and drawing in the breath through the right, (3) *Kumbhaka*, which

1. Religious Thought and Life in India by Monier Williams, Page 409—10.



consists in first pressing both nostrils with the finger and thumb and holding in the breath for as long an interval as possible. These preliminary acts which ought to be concluded before the rising of the sun are thought to be useful in fixing the mind, concentrating the thoughts, and bringing the worshipper into an attitude of attention. He is now in a position to begin the recitation of his prayers. They must be introduced by the solemn utterance of the monosyllable 'OM', called (*pranavam*), the sound being prolated to the length of three vowels. The most sacred of all Hindu utterances made up of the three letters AUM, and symbolical of the three manifestations of the one Supreme Being in the gods, Brahma, Vishnu and Siva is constantly repeated during the Sandhya service. Manu describes it as a monosyllable, imperishable and eternal as the Being himself.<sup>1</sup>

These along with *Ashtāksharam* and *Panchāksharam* are called *Chathusantikam*, and no Nambuthiri in Kerala wears the holy ashes before offerings of water to the *Pitris* (departed spirits).

A Brahmana beginning and ending a recital of the Veda or of any holy strain must always pronounce to himself the syllable "OM"; for, unless the syllable "OM" precede, his learning will slip away from him; and unless it follow, nothing will be long retained. The syllable is prefixed to the names of the worlds, which denote that the seven worlds are manifestations of the power signified by that syllable. "As the leaf of the Plāsu, says Yāgnavalkya, is supported by a single pedicle, so is this universe upheld by the syllable "AUM" a symbol of the supreme Bramham. All rights ordained in the veda, oblations to fire, and solemn sacrifices pass away; but that which passeth not away, says Manu, is declared to be the syllable "AOM" thence called *Akshara*, since it is a symbol of God, the Lord of created beings.

The next division of the service is *Upasthāna* or *Mitroupa-sthāna* because the worshipper abandons his sitting posture, stands erect with his face towards the rising sun and invokes that luminary under the name of Mitra. The prayer he now repeats is Rig Veda, Chapter III, verse 59. The translation of the first verse is herein given. At the end, the worshipper

invokes the personified dawns in the following verse : " Hail ! Brilliant dawns, daughters of Heaven ; I invoke you, bearing the oblations as a sign of my devotion ; May we be honoured and the divine earth effect that for us ". The service is now brought to a close.

The midday and the evening *Sandhya* services which are like the morning *Sandhya* except that of the *Upasthana* prayers may not be described in detail here.

Then comes the ceremony of *Bhasmadharana* or application of holy ashes. This is done by rubbing the ashes taken from the domestic sacred hearth on the head and other parts of the body with the repetition of a prayer to Siva from *Taittiriya Aranyika*, Chapter X, 43 ; " I offer homage to Siva ; May he preserve from me in every birth ; Homage to the source of all birth ". At this time every pious Hindu marks his head with the sacred mark of his own, peculiar to his faith or religious views. The three horizontal lines on the forehead of a Brahman mark him to be a Sivite. The Nambuthiris have the horizontal marks together with the circular or vertical ones, and this shows that he is a non-sectarian in religion.

*Preparation of Holy Ashes* :—The holy ashes is prepared by taking the cow's excrement and making it into small balls and then drying it in the sun. These are then collected and burned and mixed with water to remove the impurities. The water is then drawn off and the pure mass is then taken and dried ; there are four kinds of ashes, viz., (1) that obtained from a Kapila cow is *Bhuti*, (2) that from a black cow is *Bhasitam*, (3) that from a red cow is *Bhasmam*, and (4) that from a white one is *Ksharam*. Wearing of the first brings wealth and gratification of one's desire ; that of the second brings beauty ; that of the third, destruction of all sins ; and that of the fourth, removal of all calamities. The ashes should not be given or received in hand, but must be placed on a piece of plantain leaf with a vessel of water.<sup>1</sup>

The next act of the religious service of a *Bramhachari* (vedic student) is the *Samiddhānam* (worship of fire). A married man must perform his *Aupasana* ceremony every morning and evening with reverential adoration. He feeds the sacred fire with pieces of consecrated wood generally taken from the *plāsu* tree and the offerings of rice and ghee. The

<sup>1</sup>, Sankara Smṛithi. Chap. V,

oblation thus casting into the flame is supposed to ascend to the Sun, says Manu, it falls again in rain, from rain comes food, and from food all animals subsist. It is important to keep the smouldering embers of the sacred element perpetually burning. If through any accident the flame is extinguished, the whole household falls into confusion, everything goes wrong until an expiatory ceremony (*Práyaschitham*), consisting of a solemn fast observed by both husband and wife, is performed and the fire is rekindled. And this daily service is not all. Every fourteenth day is to a very pious and orthodox Hindu a holiday; it is set apart for special religious observances. Then every four months another ceremony called *Chàthurm-ásya* sacrifice is performed at the beginning of three seasons. Probably this is solemnised like a harvest thanks-giving in fructitude for the foods of the earth gathered in at the end of the three seasons of summer, autumn and winter. It is conducted with so much solemnity as the fortnightly rite and in much the same manner. Finally, every rich house-holder endeavours once a year to institute what is called *Sóma* sacrifice (*Sóma Yágam*). After the *Aupāsana* ceremony, hymns of the Veda to which he belongs are recited for an hour or two. The other ceremony which is necessary for the completion of the morning *Sandhya* is *Brahma-yajna* (*Swadhyayam*). Some recite vedic hymns and prostrate towards the Sun.

Then commences the religious service called the *Sàli-grámapuja* which is generally performed by every pious Nam-buthiri. In this, therefore, homage is paid to Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, through images or worship of the five stones or symbols which are believed to be permeated by the essence of the five chief deities. The five stones are, (1) the black stone representing Vishnu, (2) the white stone representing Siva's essence, (3) the red stone representing Ganésa, (4) the small piece of a metallic ore representing the wife of Siva, and (5) the piece of crystal representing the Sun. The first two stones *Saligrama* and *Bhānalinga* are regarded as far more sacred than manufactured idols, for such idols must be consecrated whereas these stones are occupied by Vishnu and Siva without any consecration whatever. This also is an elaborate ceremony.

There is, however, another important ceremony which ought to precede the midday meal, called the *Vaiswadeva* or offering to all the gods (*Viswa devas*). This is completed with

the performance of another rite called *Baliharana* which is only the concluding act of the former ceremony. In fact, the two ceremonies are complementary to each other, and are regarded as one ceremony. The gods referred to in this ceremony are vedic, and it is therefore from its antiquity very interesting. The idea involved in this service seems to be that before a Brahman begins to eat, he ought to consecrate his food by making offerings of small portions to all the gods, to the manes, to the spirits, and to the guests through whose favour he is himself fed, and more especially to fire, who is the bearer of the offering to Heaven. In fact, the whole ceremonial resolves itself into a form of homage of the gods who give them food and prosperity, and to the god Fire who helps the preparation of the food for eating. There is also a notion that in preparing the food by cooking, animals may have been accidentally destroyed, for which expiation should be made before the dinner is consumed. It should be observed that this ceremony is not like the *Sandhya* incumbent on every individual separately; it may be performed vicariously like *Déva-puja* through one member of the family acting for the others. After the performance of these ceremonies the process of dining, which is regarded as a religious rite, must be conducted according to prescribed forms. (Vide food).

The fire which witnessed the union of the young couple and which is brought to their home, is placed on the floor of the house consecrated as a sanctuary for its reception and perpetual maintenance. It can never be blown upon with the mouth. Nothing impure is thrown into it, nor is it ever used for warming the feet. According to a verse in the *Rig Véda*, the Supreme Being developes the whole order of the existing deities through the operation of heat. According to another verse it is believed that all gods are comprehended in fire. He surrounds them as the circumference of a wheel does the spokes. In fact, it is the embodiment not only of heat but of all Nature. It has the three forms, in the air as the Sun in Heavens. And yet the three forms are often understood in the one form of fire. Hence fire is not only a symbol of the presence of the Supreme Being among men, but is an emblem of His creative fostering and disintegrating energies, a type of His three eternal attributes 'Life, Light and Joy.'

Like Fire the Sun is also worshipped in the *Gāyatri* prayer, though inaccessible and sometimes invisible. In ancient times the householder was contented with what was called *Grihyagni* or house-hold fire and was sufficient for all household purposes. But those who were more pious and wished to engage in vedic rites (*Srauta karma*) took care to construct more elaborate *homa sala* (room for sacrifices on the ground floor) where fire was kindled in three receptacles, fire in each having a different name (*Ahavanīya*, *Garhapatya* and *Dakshina*). When the fire is thus lighted, it was regarded as a sign of God, present in the house as a guest who lived in the family, the divine mediator who bore the flavour of daily offerings to Heaven.

After meals the pious Nambuthiri takes some rest either by taking a short nap or by conversing with some caste-men of his. After an hour or two he engages himself by teaching vedas to some youngsters or read *Purānas* for his own enlightenment and also for that of others in his own family. He is then engaged in the affairs of the family for an hour or two and again at six or even earlier he performs his evening *Sandhya*, goes to the temple to worship the deity, and either performs some *japam* or recites the names of Vishnu or Siva. He then takes his supper and goes to bed.

The women of the family or the wife of the Nambuthiri also bathe early enough, adore the deities in their own temple and make ready everything necessary for the *pūjas* to be performed by the house-holder. They attend to the work in the kitchen, and meanwhile worship Ganapathi, Bhagavathi and Siva with due offerings. In the afternoon a few hours are spent in the perusal of the *Purānas* and other sacred books. In the evening also they worship the deities as before and after the supper of males, they partake of the remaining meals and at last retire to bed.

The daily religious observances of the orthodox Nambuthiris thus far described represent the earliest religion of the Brāhmins in ancient times, and are continued even to this day. The chief gods were the Fire-god (the earth-born Agni) the Rain-god (the air-born Indra), and the Sun-god (the sky-born Surya, or Savitri), one for each of three worlds earth, air and sky (*Bhur*, *Bhuvah*, *Svar*). All other vedic deities appear to be either modifications of or associated with one or other of the member of the vedic trinity above mentioned. The Fire-god

(*Agni*) has various attributes. He was the god on the earth and therefore more accessible than other deities. He was also a "domestic god, the father of the sacrifice, the mediator between men and gods, the bearer of hymns and prepares from every family altar upwards towards Heaven". He has been an object of veneration among all nations. Even the Sun-god is considered to be a form of Heavenly fire and is foremost in adoration among all pagan nations.

*Ritualistic Brahmanism* :—The religion of Brahmins became more and more ritualistic and anthropomorphic. Sacrifice to the gods became more and more complicated. In its purest form it meant some simple gift as an expression of gratitude or a simple thank offering for blessing received and afterwards as an act of propitiation for purely private or selfish ends. The second great aim was to nourish the gods with the essence of offered food, and to strengthen them for their daily duty of maintaining the continuity of the Universe. The third important aim was that of making these oblations of food the means of obtaining boons from these invigorated and gratified deities for the accomplishment of some great object, such as the birth of a son, some supreme human powers and even exaltation to Heaven. The attainment of these desires or purposes gave rise to elaborate and complicated sacrificial rites, such as *Aswamedha*, *Jyotishtoma*, *Agnishtoma*, *Aptoryama* for which an organisation of regularly constituted hierarchy was formed, and to have them carefully performed, the services of the sixteen classes of priests were found necessary for the correct recital of innumerable vedic hymns and texts. These priests were adequately rewarded for their whole course of prayers, praise, ritual and oblations. The sacrifice or *Yajna* as it was called was a chain, every link of which required to be complete and perfect in all its parts. The belief is that the sacrificer could effect anything in this world or the other, even rise to the level of the highest deities. It is the maintainer of the energies of the Universe, and the great source of all benefits. It could bless him with a whole line of sons and grand-sons. It is also believed that Gods themselves attained their celestial position by performing sacrifices; by sacrifices says the *Taittiriya Brahmana*, the gods obtained Heaven.

In course of time, people became tired of offerings and the ceremonies connected with them, and thoughtful men

finding no interest in these external rites took refuge in speculative enquiries and metaphysical investigations, and the chief result of them was the 'excogitation of the Upanishads' or hidden spiritual doctrine of the Veda.

It is said that the Upanishads are the Bible of the phase of Brahmanism, and that many treatises were added to the mantra and Brahmana portion of the Veda, while the aphorisms or the three philosophical systems were their branches namely, Nyāya with Veisheshika, Sāṅkya with Mimāṃsa were founded on these writings. There are scholars among the Nambuthiris who are proficient in the knowledge of these subjects.

*Popular or puranic religion* :—Besides the various forms of vedic worship and the ceremonies connected therewith, the Nambuthiris have temples for worship either in their own compounds or in the vicinity of them. There are also grand temples in their important centres and these sacred institutions unlike those of the East Coast in architecture, are dedicated to the superior deities Vishnu and Siva, their consorts and their incarnations in various forms and also to Ganapathi.

A typical temple consists of the *Sri-kōvil* or the principal shrine containing the *Siva-Lingam* or the image of Vishnu or some incarnations of his (Sri Rama, Sri Krishna, etc.). It is generally either a rectangular or circular building with a pyramidal or conical roof which is either tiled or covered with copper plates. The sides consist of a peculiar kind of dense lattice work of wood or mortar standing in a low laterite wall. In some big temples like Trichur and Perumanam, there are more than one of these sacred shrines dedicated to different deities. In front of the *Sri-kovil* is the *mukhamandapam* in which the Brahmins perform their *Namaskārams* (prostrations) and *japams* (meditations). The *Sri-kovil*, *Mukhamandapam* and shrines of minor deities are enclosed in a quadrangular edifice *nālabalam*, which consists of low verandahs with tiled or thatched roofs; portions of which may be shrines of minor deities. In some temples a portion of this is converted into a room which may serve as a kitchen for performing the offerings (*nivēdyams*) to the deities; and close to this is also a well. All these within the quadrangular edifice constitute what is called *chuttambalam*, surrounding which there is another quadrangular edifice with an elaborate wood-work on which are fixed small iron or

brass hollow vessels shaped like leaves of the pipal tree, to serve as lamps for illuminations on occasions of grand festivals. In front of the entrance of this *nīlambalam* is a *Deepasthambam* (lamp-post), and close to this is also a *Dwaja sthambam* (a wooden post on which a flag is suspended during *Utsavam* or festival in a temple. Around the *Nālambalam* and at a small distance from it, is the outer wall in the court-yard of which are *Agrasalas* (halls in which Brahmans are fed) and other buildings, while at the entrances are *Gōpurams* or two storied structures, the general appearance of which says Ferguson, in his History of Architecture, is distinctly Chinese or Mongolian though there does not seem to be sufficient reasons to attribute this to the direct Chinese influence. At a short distance from the outer wall, there is also an *Aswasatham* or Pipal tree with a granite or laterite platform round it. Only Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Ambalavasis and high caste Sudras can enter the *nālambalam* to worship the deities; while the Tamil and low caste Malayali Sudras are forbidden to enter it, but can come as far as *Bali-kallu* (sacrificial stone) outside the quadrangular edifice. The members of the polluting castes outside the wall can stand near the pipal tree outside the walls for purposes of worship.

*Deities in temples* :—As has been already said, Vishnu, Siva and Sakti under various names or shapes, divide the homage of the Hindu religion and these gods and goddesses are represented by images which are either self grown or made by man. In the *Padma Purana* it is said, that the abode of Hari is celebrated by two kinds, namely, the established and the self-revealed. The image of Hari made by stone, earth, wood, metal or the like, and consecrated according to the rites laid down in the *Vedas*, *Smritis*, and *Tantras*, is called the established. Where the Vishnu has placed himself on earth in stone or wood for the benefit of mankind, that is called the self-revealed. Vishnu in the above passage is typical of all deities. (Skandapurana, Uttarakanda). Even in these days the miraculous discovery of divine images is not unknown to the faithful, and a common preliminary to such finds, is that a vision appears in a dream to one of the devout worshippers who communicates the same to his relations and neighbours, when a procession is formed to the spot,



where the image is discovered to the delight of the faithful and to the advantage of the favoured dreamer, who becomes the custodian of the image, which may afterwards be established and consecrated in a temple. But Hindu sages have always treated this form of worship as an inferior one, fit only for those who are unable to grasp the abstract idea of the Supreme Being. This statement will be clear from the following passages: "I am in the fire for those who sacrifice, in the heart of those who recite prayers; in images for those of small understanding; for those of true knowledge, I am everywhere."

Stone images are one of the most common types now prevalent; and stone is now employed for the construction of *Sivalingam*. Special directions are given for the selections of stones for the construction of images. Stones saturated with acid saline or efflorescent substances, those thrown upon the banks of rivers and those found in barren soil and in ant-hills, and warmed by solar rays or burnt by forest fire are to be avoided; stones which are smooth, of uniform colour, lying under ground, untouched by solar rays, immersed in water, are approved. Stones are classified as infant, young, adult, and old according to their scale of hardness. The very soft varieties of stones are rejected, while the medium ones are recommended. The stone thus selected is to be brought and placed in the working-shed which is to be erected to the north of the temple, where it has to be worshipped, before being taken in by the sculptor.

For the construction of the image of Sivalingam, according to *Brihat Samhita*, the stone is set out in the length of the circumference of the round part, and the whole *phallus* is divided into three portions of which the part of the base must be quadrangular, that in the middle octangular and the rest round. The quadrangular portion is covered in a pit, and the middle member into the cavity of the pedestal, which is visible upwards to its cavity in all directions over an extent equal to its height. The greatest care has to be taken in the construction of these images intended for worship. According to the authority above referred to, an image possessing the required characteristics, besotws prosperity by its very presence. According to another authority the author of an image of Vishnu possessing all the necessary qualities is blessed with long life, while dire consequences are to be apprehended from

the existence of any defect in the image intended for dedication. The gods do not accept the offerings of the men who worship divine image defective in the prescribed characteristics. According to Varāha Mahira, an image with disproportionate limbs bodes peril to the monarch; one with under-sized limbs infirmity to the maker; one with a thin belly, danger of famine; and one that is lean, loss of wealth. When it shows a wound, the death of the maker from the sword may be predicted by being bent to the left. It destroys his wife by being bent to the right. It causes blindness by having its eyes turned upwards, and anxiety by the eyes being downcast. The same sentiments are found more fully developed in the Matsyapurana also.

Siva Lingams are also made from sun-stones, moon-stones, load-stones, diamond, emerald, talc and other kinds of minerals bright as lightning, and self-illuminating at night. Each of them is effective for certain special purposes. The pearl gives fortune. The moon-stone conquers death. The sun-stone gives power; diamonds, emeralds, and crystals fulfil every kind of desire. Images are also made of gold, silver and of baser metals. Of the pure metals, gold, is mentioned in the Aswalayana *Grihya Parsishta*. "The image of the gods should never be made deficient or having an excess of limbs. An image with a hideous face causes the death of the owner. A corpulent image destroys the artist, and an emaciated one destroys wealth. One thin in the middle causes famine, and one without flesh causes loss of wealth. One with a crooked nose causes sorrow and one with a compact body causes fear. A flat nosed one causes trouble and affliction, and one with no eyes destroys the eyes. One with a defective face and one with sparing hands and feet, causes grief. One deficient in limbs and one with short thighs cause terror and madness in men. One with a weary face or one without a waist destroys the king. If the image be without hands or feet, then a great plague is caused; and one without knees or thighs causes the good of the enemy. One without breast destroys children and friends".<sup>1</sup>

*The consecration ceremony:*—As to the parties competent to celebrate the installation, the *Devi Purana* directs that the

1. The Hindu Law of Endowments by Pandit Prannath Saraswati, pages 93, 102-105.

gold image should be installed with due regard to the caste or order of the worshipper. According to *Brihat Samhita* Sambhu is the god of the Brahman. The Devipuranam allows all the four castes to worship Vishnu. Linga Archana Tantra enjoins the worship of the emblem of Siva upon all the four castes threatening extreme penalties for non-compliance. The ceremonies connected with the construction, ablutions, vivification, *hómam*, and the setting up of images, are very elaborate, and is therefore omitted for want of space. By the last process of vivification the image from the previous status, as an inanimate object, acquires the status of a sacred entity or ideal personality possessing superhuman powers.

The worship of the gods is one of the daily duties of the Brahmans. Enjoined by Parasara and Manu, 276—describes the following as part of the duties of the Brahmachari. "Day by day, having bathed and purified, let him offer fresh water to the gods, the sages and manes; Let him show respect to the images of the deities; and bring wood for the oblation to the fire." A house-holder or a *Grihasta* is also required by Manu in Chapter IV, Verse 56, to adore the gods at the beginning of the day. When an idol has thus been consecrated by appropriate ceremonies, the deity of which the idol is the visible image, resides in it.

*The daily routine of pujas performed in a temple:—*  
The *puja* in a temple may be said to begin at 4 P. M. daily when the doors of the *Sri-kovil* are opened at that hour. The senior priest after bath enters the temple with his assistants, opens the doors of the *Sri-kovil* wherein the god resides to the booming of the conch shell of the *Máran*. The old flowers (*nirmályam*) dress, jewels with which the god or goddess was decorated is removed, and the image is then washed (*abhishékam*) and bathed with water with the recital of the vedic hymns. After this the deity is well rubbed, and then dressed in newly washed clothes and decorated with flowers and jewels, and a *Pushpúnjeli* or an offering of flowers is then made. This is followed by the offering of food or *nivedium*, which is generally *malar* (parched rice). This closes the *puja* of the morning or *Usha puja*.

At 7 o'clock begins another *puja* and *nivedium*, when the *Nirmályam* flowers (*Prasadam*), water (*Thirtham*), are given by the priest to the people that have assembled there at

the time. In some temples, the image of the deity is then taken out by a *Múthathu* around the *Nalambalam* in procession with music and tom tom, when the priest makes offerings to the minor deities and demons (*Bhutas*), and after its return to the *Srikoil* another offering of *nivedium* is made.

About 10 A. M., commences the *Panthiradi* or forenoon *púja*, and the same items as mentioned above are gone through and offerings of cooked rice, *Páyasam*, etc., are made. At the conclusion of this *puja* the offerings are partly distributed among the servants of the temple. In some temples as *Thiruvanchikulam*, there is also another *púja* at noon (*Ucha Púja*), when similar formalities are gone through. Then there is no *puja* till the close of the day, and the priest and others have some rest.

The evening *púja* begins at 6 P. M., or even earlier, when the *Deepárádhana* (waving of lights) forms one of the important occasions for worship. The image is then neatly decorated with jewels, sandal paste, flowers, silks and cloths, and the inner shrine is brilliantly lighted. At this time the temple is very much crowded and very few who could afford would be absent there then. On important occasions men, women, and children crowd in at the time in large numbers. *Deepárádhana* is accompanied with the playing of flutes, drums and the ringing of bells when the devotees sing *slókams* (verses) in praise of the deity. *Prasúdams* are then distributed to the worshippers. Then the last *púja* for the night is the *Ardhajúma Puja*, the course of worship is almost the same as that described above. The *nivedium* alone is different, and consists of sugared cakes, cooked rice, sweet and beaten rice, honey, fruits, green cocoanuts, and betel leaves. The daily round of *puja* then terminates with this at about 9 or 10 P. M.; and all the priests and servants leave the shrine, and the senior priest, being escorted by a servant with a *kodivilakku* or a portable metal lamp, which is another emblem of his dignity and status. It must be mentioned, in this connection, that the chief priest, *Mel-Sánthikáran* (senior priest) alone is privileged to touch the image to which *pújas* are offered. The *Kizhsánthikáran* (his assistant) can only assist him in his work. This is a great privilege to them in the temples of this coast, as no worshipper, however high his position may be, can touch the image, anoint it or place flowers over it. During *Utsavams* (festivals) and other

special ceremonial occasions the *Tantri Nambuthiripad* performs the *Sri-Bhuta Beli*, which is an important item during these ceremonies. It is believed that any mistake, however small, in the performance of this rite, whether committed by the *Tantri* or the *Maran* who beats his drum in measure to the quick *Tantram*—passes of the Nambuthiri will seriously injure the *Tantri*, the *drummer* and the *Bhutams*, whom the *pújas* are intended to propitiate.

Besides the priests and their assistants already mentioned, every temple has its own staff of servants and servant-maids, such as the light carriers, the musicians, the *Márans*, whose business it is to sing and sound the conch-shell, flute, the *takil* or the drum, and the *páni*; another drum that gives a shrill note. The sweepers, the cooks, the vessel-cleaners, water-drawers and the accountants, the guards, the hereditary singers, the garland makers, etc. "Thus a high caste Hindu temple on this coast is a centre of attraction to the old and the young by its perfect system of worship, by the piety and peace it breathes, its remarkable neatness, its marvellous punctuality and the regularity in the performance of the daily *pújas* and the active benefits which it dispenses, and more than all, the devotion, the reverence and the order which it inculcates on the thousands of votaries that visit it."<sup>1</sup>

Besides the orderly routine of the daily *pújas* in temples, there are some festivals (*Utsavams*) attached to each in certain months of the year. In this connection, it will be interesting to give the origin of some of the most important temples of the State, with the festivals celebrated in each.

(1) *Vadakkunnathan temple*.—This temple is by far the most important of the religious institutions in the State. It is called *Vrishabadri* in ancient writings, and a full description of the origin and sanctity of this temple is found in *Kérala Máhātmyam* and *Nárasimha Puranam*. The temple is said to have been built and consecrated by the great Parasurama after the reclamation of Kerala from the sea, and its situation is on an elevated ground in the Trichur town, which is almost the centre of Kerala. It was for a long time under the management of *Yogādrīpad Sanyásis*, installed from time to time, and after the death of the last incumbent in 930 M. E., and after a period of hostilities with the Zamorin, the undisputed right of His

1. The Travancore State Manual, Vol. II, Chap. VIII, page 77.

Highness the Raja of Cochin to manage the affairs of the temple was established in 938 M. E. In the year 945 M. E., a great *Kalasam* was performed to purify the temple. Since then, it has been under the management of the Government. It is one of the richest temples in the State. Festivals connected with it are the *Pûram* in the month of Medom, and the *Sivarâthri* which falls in Kumbham.

(2) *Perumanam temple*.—This temple is a very important one, both in antiquity and sanctity. It is said to be in existence with the origin of Kerala and the advent of Parasurama. Of the 64 *grāmams* into which the kingdom was divided by Parasurama, the temple was built and consecrated for the benefit of the Perumanam *Yogakkárs* who managed it through three *Urâllers* as their special agents. In 969 M. E. the *Yogakkárs* surrendered their rights of management to the then governing Raja of Cochin. The temple was brought under Government control in 1028 M. E. It is said that an *Utsavam* for 28 days used to be conducted in this temple about 1300 years ago, but was since discontinued, and that the present festival called *Puram*, celebrated in Meenom, took its place. This temple is an equally important one as the Trichur temple.

(3) *Thiruvilvamala temple*.—This temple is another equally important one both in sanctity and as a place of pilgrimage. It is built on the summit of a small hill about two miles to the south of the Lakádi Railway Station. It is said to have been consecrated by Parasurama, as an act of penance. It was brought under Sirkar management in 994 M. E. and prior to that date it was under six *Urallars*, called *Parasudayavars*, clearly signifying that they were appointed by Parasurama. The most important annual festival in the temple is the Krishna *Ekâdesi* in the month of Kumbham, which attracts a large crowd from various parts.

(4) *Thiruvanchikulam Temple*.—This temple is one of the very ancient temples in South India. It is said to be what Chitambaram in eastern districts, and it is even sometimes called *Kizh-Chithambaram* (lower Chithambaram). This second temple is generally believed to have been built and dedicated by Cheraman Perumal from whom the ownership and management of the temple passed to the Raja of Cochin who handed it over to the Sirkar in 993 M. E. There were no separate *Urallars* or managers till 993 M. E. The management

seems to have been vested in the *Veluthar* Nambiyar, belonging to the present Moothathu family, under His Highness' *Thitturam*. *Sivaráthri* is the important festival in this temple. The daily routine of *pújas* here is somewhat peculiar and different from that in other temples of the State.

(5) *Trippunithura temple*.—This temple is one of great antiquity and one of the most important of sacred institutions close to the residence of His Highness the Raja and the members of the Royal family. The image of Balakrishna is said to have been installed by Arjuna on the fifty-first day after the commencement of Kaliyuga, and the date is remembered by the mnemonic "Padmam." The *Utsavam* in the temple falls in the month of Vrischigam (November).

*Ganapathi and Ganapathi Homam*.—Ganesa or Vigneswara is the most popular god worshipped by the Nambuthiris and all other classes of Brahmans especially by the Sivites. Vigneswara means remover of obstacles, and his blessings are invoked for success in the performance of religious acts, and in fact, before the commencement of any undertaking. He is considered to be the embodiment of wisdom and shrewdness, patience and self reliance, and in fact every quality that lead to success in life. Every Indian book opens with *Ganesayanamah* (salutation to Ganapathi). In every Nambuthiri house Ganapathi is propitiated and this propitiation (*Ganapathi Homam*) was introduced by Parasurama.

For *Ganapathi Homam* a pit 4 feet by 2 feet (*hòmakundam*) is made in the central part of the room. Fire is lit in the pit with dried jack-wood and cocoanut husks, and the offerings consist of rice, fried rice (*malar*), cocoanuts, plantains, plantain fruits, sugar-cane, sugar, honey, ghee and sweetmeats which are put in the fire with the recital of holy *mantrams*. The smoke arising therefrom fills the house with a healthy sweet smell all around. In every Sivite temple, there is a small shrine dedicated to Ganapathi.

*Utsavam in a typical temple*.—Every temple has its *Utsavam* or festival once in a year and lasts either for five days in some or seven in others. It begins with the *Kodiyéttam* or the hoisting of the flag. Every day both in the morning at 8 and 4 o'clock in the evening, the images of the gods or goddesses with all the attractive paraphernalia are taken in procession round the *chuttambalam* on elephants with a grand display of

drum-beating, and other musical instruments at the close of which the Brahmans are treated to a feast of *kanji*, *pappadam*, pieces of cocoanut, with sugar and a sour vegetable curry. There is the same kind of grand procession with the images mounted on elephants which lasts for two or three hours; the interval between 8 and 4 o'clock being taken up by a variety of amusements. There is also a grand feast to the Brahmans assembled there then. A similar procession at 1 P. M., with bright illuminations round the temple attracts a large number of spectators. Various kinds of dramatic performances peculiar to Malabar are acted during night. Thus the festival is continued for seven days. On the night of the last day there is a grand display or fire-works. On the night previous to the last, the deity is taken to a neighbouring place, where the god is supposed to hunt. This procession is called *Pallivetta* which with the *Arat* is supposed to cause pollution which is removed by a bath for purification on the last day. The *Arat* is an imposing ceremony on the last day which attracts a large number of people. The procession with the image on a well decorated elephant advances to the bathing ghat which may be either a tank, river or sea near which the temple is situated, and there the elephant is bathed and the image is purified by a bath with the recital of holy *mantrams*. The people in the procession also bathe and become purified by the sanctified water. The elephant with the image on him returns in procession to the temple and the image is made to resume its usual seat and the flag is then hoisted down. The festival is then brought to a close.

*Kadavallur Varam*.—The three vedas (Tri-Vidya) Rig, Yajus and Sama Veda are current among the Nambuthiris, and the first two have a large number of followers among them. The Sama Vedis in the State are confined to about 24 families, and belong to the school of the *Jaiminas* while the *Kousitaki* and Asvalāyana sections of the Nambuthiris have one and the same *Samhita* text of the Rig Veda though with different Brahmanas and Sutras. For the advanced studies of the Rig Veda, there exist two advanced rival colleges or *Mutts*, one at Trichur and the other at Thirunavai in South Malabar, each managed by its own hereditary *Vādhyāin* or managing teacher. These ancient vedic institutions were richly endowed and patronized by the Raja of Cochin and the Zamorin of Calicut, the rulers



of the two rival kingdoms of ancient Malabar. All the Rig Vedic Nambuthiris of Malabar, Cochin and Travancore belong to either the one or the other of these institutions. Every year pupils from the rival institutions meet at the temple of Kadavallur during the *Mandalam* (forty-one days) to compete "Whole-heartedly" for the verdict of proficiency. The syllabus consists of the texts of the Rig Veda in the four forms of the *Pada-pátha*, *Krama-pátha*, *Jada-pátha* and *Ratha-pátha*. The last which is the most complicated and a difficult mode of recitation, is based on the *Krama-pátha* method. It may be described thus: "If one *anta* or half verse consists of four words, a, b, c, d, these must be grouped in the following order. ab, ba, ab, bc, cba, ab, be, cd, dcba; and ab, bc, cd, and d. The symbolic representation, and teaching of the *Padapátha* and the more elaborate methods of recitation based on it seem to be peculiar to, if not a special invention of the Nambuthiris of Malabar. All the verses that are analysed in the *Pada* text, and these only are much mechanically reproduced with exactness, being communicated and taught by means of a series of finger and palm signs, are symbols resembling those of the deaf, dumb alphabets".<sup>1</sup> This course is also taught in the two vedic colleges above mentioned. In this connection, it will be interesting to give an account of how the comparative vedic recitation for proficiency takes place in the temple of Kadavallur. The vedic recitation takes place in temple for forty-one days, sixteen of which are assigned to the competition for proficiency. In this *Ekúdesi* and *Vávu*—eleventh day after the full-moon and the new-moon,—are eliminated on the 30th day of Thulam, the competitors after worshipping the deity Dekshinamurthy at the Chovaram village, reach the afore-said temple in the evening. From that day until it is over, the Trichur *Yogakkár*, i. e., the disciples of the Trichur college and the Thirunavai *Yogakkár* (disciples of the Thirunavai college are lodged in the Moothathu houses, *Achu Moothathu* and *Pakshiyil Moothathu* respectively. It is there that the *Yogakkárs* are sumptuously fed during the day. In the temple the two parties occupy two separate halls during prayers, and do not freely mingle with one another during these days of competition.

The vedic students rise early morning at 4 A. M. every day, bathe and go to the temple at 6 o'clock., and perform

1. The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, July 1910, page 630.

*Namaskárams* to the deity (*Sri-Ráma*) in the temple with the recital of the vedic hymns. This continues till about 10 o'clock or 11 o'clock, when they go to their respective lodging, perform their noon-day prayers, and dine in the houses where they stay. At about 3 o'clock the competitors place a small sum of money in the presence of the few senior members, who are privileged to sit on a grass mat on the floor, when they bow before them. Immediately after, the Moothathu or *Aka-Pothuval* takes the money with the permission of the *Sabhakkar*—elderly members—and under their directions, illuminates the *Sri-kovil*, decorates the image Sri-Rama and makes offerings of sweet bread to the deity, which are afterwards distributed among the Brahmans assembled in the temple. The competitors bathe and return to the temple to worship the deity, with the hope of success in their aspiration for vedic proficiency. At 4 P. M., the vedic students rubbing their bodies with gingelly oil, bathe in the tank close by, cleaning themselves with country soap. They all return to the temple to worship the deity as before. It is interesting to note the earnestness and the sincerity with which the young students worship the deity, performing *Namaskarams* (prostrations) with the recital of the vedic texts. No Sudras are allowed to enter the *Nálambalam* during these periods, and even Tamil Brahmans are sparingly allowed to be in their midst. Brahman women also are forbidden to enter the *Nálambalam* during these periods. After the usual evening service in the temple, the man who performs the *Váram* places a sum of money necessary for the expenses of the feast. Moothathus Manakulam, Punnathur, Ainikkur, Nampitis and Chakkiyars are all allowed to celebrate the festival in the temple at their own expenses.

The young vedic student from one of the parties worships the deity in the temple, takes his seat in the *Koothambalam*. A few senior members proficient in the vedic study from each party sit by his side; a portion of the text for recitation is selected by the members of the rival party. The judges watch him very closely, and a detection of any error in it, will lead to his failure, and a correct recitation will end in their applause. After this commences the second *Váram*, for which a student from the other party takes his seat as before in the midst of the senior members who act as judges. A portion is selected for him to recite. The bystanders are anxious to see whether he recites

correctly or commits an error. The third one is called *Koottu Váram* for which a few members from each party recite conjointly. After this, pujas are performed to the deity and this is followed by *Sri-veli*, when the deity is taken round the *Nalambalam* in procession to the accompaniment of the sound of musical instruments. Lastly, the members of each party sit in order in the special seats allowed to them, where they are treated to a feast and during this time two young disciples commence to recite a special portion on the *Ratha* method. Even if they commit an error they are coached up until they finish. During the first four and the last four days vedic texts are recited on the *Ratha* style, while in the intervening eight days the recitations are on the *Jata* style. The Pujas are performed and offerings to the deity made with the greatest care during these days, lest any defect in them might in their opinion lead to the divine displeasure. There are no such institutions for those who follow *Yajur* veda and *Sama* veda, but the recital takes place in some of their temples during certain months of the year. The *Yajur* veda current among the Nambuthiris is that of the *Taittiriya* school of the so called 'Black recension of this veda'. Its *Apasthamba* subdivision is said to have existed in Malabar until very recently, but is now extinct. All the *Yajur* vedic Nambuthiris belong to the Baudhayana school, while the remaining few represent the *Bádhluka* section. The latter appears to be the followers of *Vádhina Sutra* mentioned by Mahadeva in the introduction to his commentary on the *Kalpa Sutra* of Satyasadha Hiranyakesin. The only different one existing between these two schools—Baudhayanas and *Badhulakas*—is to be found in their vedic ritual and ceremonies, not in their vedic texts, both the *Samhita* and the *Brahmana* being the same for both.

The custom and manners observed by the Nambuthiris are strictly those laid down in the *Sánkara Smrithi* and *Sankarachariyar* is reputed to be the author of this important treatise. To the Hindu population of these parts, his life and personality is of special interest and value, and a brief account of him here is necessary.

Sri Sankarachariar was a Nambuthiri Brahman of the Kaipilly Illom (a Nambuthiri house) in Káladi, a place six miles off from the Angamáli Railway station on the Cochin-Shoranur line. This house has long since vanished, but the

spot whereon it stood was enclosed by a wall, and is now marked by a banyan tree. His parents, Sivaguru and Sri-devi, who were both devout worshippers of Siva, were for a long time childless, and after years of prayers and penance, they were blessed with one whom they named Sankara after their favourite deity. The date of his birth is even now a matter of controversy, some placing it as early as the third century, while others to 785 A. D. 825 and A. D. respectively, but the orthodox traditionists put it at years before the Christian Era. Sankara was five years of age when his father died, but before his death he performed for his illustrious son the ceremony of *Upanayanam* (investiture of holy thread). According to another tradition, current among the people of Kerala, he lost his father during his third year, after which both the mother and the son were under the protection of their relatives, one of whom performed for him the ceremony above referred to, in his fifth year. The latter version is not accepted by the *Sringeri Mutt*. The boy grew to a prodigy in his eighth year and was well-versed in the study of the *Védas* and *Sastras*; but against the wishes of his mother he resolved to become a *Sanyasi*. There is a popular tradition in support of this. One day the mother and son went to bathe in the river close by, which was then in flood; and as he was having his plunge, he felt that a crocodile was dragging him by the foot. He then cried aloud to his mother that he was about to die, and wished to have the satisfaction of dying as a *Sanyasi*, because he might then depart in peace. His mother could not then hesitate, and told him that he was a *Sanyasi*. Luckily he had a narrow escape from the calamity. Henceforth he was an ascetic though he was not ordained to be one.

Sankara took leave of his mother, promising to be by her side during her last days. He became a disciple of Govindaswamy<sup>2</sup>, whom he always styled *Govinda Bhagavat Pádar* and from whom he learned *Vedánta Sūtras*, *Karma Sūtras*, and other works of philosophy, and soon mastering them he prepared his admirable commentaries on the chief *Upanishads*, *Gita* and *Vedánta Sūtras*. In his sixteenth year he was ordained an

1. According to a recent astrological calculation (1) Saka year 728, (2) Vikrama year 863, (3) 805 A. D. (4) Kali year 3907.

2. According to one account his hermitage was on the bank of the Narbada, while according to another in the Himalayas.

ascetic under the spiritual tutelage of his illustrious *guru*, and with his blessings went to Kasi (Benares), where he worshipped the God Viswanátha and paid his respects to the renowned Vyasa, to whom he submitted his commentaries for approval. Thoroughly satisfied with his works Vyasa blessed him, and by his advice Sankara travelled throughout India, preaching the Vedantic creed and successfully refuting the professors of various religious sects. It is said that he spent two years in Benares, where he met two of his famous disciples (Padmapadachariar and Thoṭakachariar), to whom he taught his commentaries, and that along with them he went to Prayag (Allahabad) and bathed in Trivēni (the confluence of the three rivers) in honour of his mother. He met Kumárala Bhatta who is said to have ground the *Bhuddhas* and Jains in oil-mills, and who was then on the point of death. Kumara declined to argue with Sankara, but referred him to Mandanamisra who was married to his younger sister Sárada, believed to have been an incarnation of Saraswathi, on account of her great learning. Sankara introduced himself to Mandanamisra, whom he defeated in argument in the presence of his wife. The latter subsequently challenged him on all the Sūtras with a view to defeat him. As Sankara still remained invincible, she hit upon the expedient of testing him in the science of love or *Kāmasāstra*. Being unable to meet her in argument, Sankara resolved to obtain a short respite to enable himself to study the subject. He went to Amritapura, where he animated the dead body of Prince Amaru, in whose form he acquired familiarity with the subject by practice in the gratification of the passions; and on his return, was victorious over Sarada. The throne of Saraswathi on which he then sat is still shown in Kashmir.

Consecrating Mandanamisra as a *Sanyāsi* (ascetic) under the name of Suréswaracharya, he bound Saraswathi with spells, and conveyed her to Sringeri where he established a throne for her. After this incident Sankara became famous in all the Indian States of the time, and this led to future achievements. He established several monasteries or *Mutts*, the chief of which are those of Badrinath in the North, Jagannath in

1. According to another account, he became a *Sanyasi* even earlier, and prepared his commentaries under orders of Visweswara, or Siva whom he met at Benares. He went from Benares to Badrinath where he prepared them,

the East, Sringeri in the South, and Dwáraka in the West ; to the headship over each of which he appointed one of his chief disciples. These religious establishments have a complete organization and a regular provision for self-perpetuation, so that the spiritual powers of the first head of the community were transmitted by a kind of 'apostolical succession' through a line of succeeding heads regularly elected. Having set up a *Sivalingam* at Kedárnath, he returned by way of Ayódhya, Gaya and Jagannáth to Sri Saila. On his way he established the four Mutts at Trichur ; two of which (*Thekkématam* and *Naturvilmamatam*) are even now in existence and are presided over by Nambuthiri *Sanyásis* who have descended in a regular line of succession from the original head of the Mutts. After this Sankara resolved to go to Benares, but changing his mind he returned to his native village, conscious of the approaching death of his mother, whom he found in a dying condition. He offered up prayers in honour of Siva and Vishnu on her behalf, and thereby obtained salvation for her.

There are traditions which refer to the various difficulties to which his relatives and village folk exposed him. They threw obstacles in the way of his orthodox ceremonials of cremation, and he was so helpless that with the help of some Sudras he was forced to make a sacrificial pit, and there consigned his mother's mortal remains. For this the Brahmins of the Pázhur village were so cursed that they cannot become *Sanyasis* even to this day, nor receive *Sanyasis* as guests in their own *Illams*. It is said that, in memory of this, he ordained that Sudras can help at the funerals of Nambuthiris—a custom which, however, is reprobated on the East Coast. Another custom which he is said to have introduced is that every dead Nambuthiri body should be touched with a knife at various points to show that the same procedure was followed by him for his mother's cremation. It was at this time that he is believed to have composed the Sankara Smrithi, which laid down rules for the conduct of the Nambuthiris as well as others.

Contracting some dangerous disease during his travels through Hindustan, he died at the age of thirty-two. Several places (Badrinath, Conjeevaram, Kedárnath and Sringeri) contend for the honour of having been his last resting place. If Madhwa's account of Sankara is reliable, then probably the last is his true resting place ; further the succession of the *Gurus* at

Sringeri is traced from him directly, and a small temple is there shown as the place where he disappeared from life. It contains an image of him seated after the manner of Buddhist and Jain images. The Sringeri Mutt, basing its authority on a Sanskrit work Sankara-dig-vijayam, compiled by Vidyāran-yaswami, says, that travelling *via* Haridwar, Rudra-padam, Gauri-Sankar, he went to Kailas alive. There is also a tradition in Kerala that he 'shuffled off his mortal coil' from Sri Mula-sthānam in Trichur.

The fame and influence of the great man are perpetuated in his writings. He is the most famous of all commentators, and chief among his works are the commentaries on the Upanishads, *Vedānta Sūtras*, *Bhagavat Gita*, *Vishnu Sahasranāma* and *Soundharya Lahari*. He it was who founded the sect of *Vedantists* who have always held the highest reputation for learning, and the cultivation of Sanskrit vedic literature. As an unsectarian he admitted all other objects of worship, believing them to be manifestations of Siva or Mahadeva—the Great God.

The vedantic system advocated by Sankara is pantheistic and based on the doctrine of Advaita or non-dualism, which means that the Universe is not distinct from the Supreme soul. The leading tenet of the sect is the recognition of Brahman, Para Brahman, as the only really existing Being, the sole cause and supreme ruler of the Universe, as distinct from Siva, Vishnu and Brahma, or any individual member of the Pantheon. To know Him is to know the supreme god. The attainment of this complete wisdom results in *Mukti*, or liberation, and reunion with the divine essence. But as the mind of man cannot elevate itself to the contemplation of the inscrutable first cause, he may be contemplated through the prescribed rites and exercises. The creed thus tolerates the worship of all the Hindu deities.

It is said that Sankara did not found any Sivite sect properly so called, and that, even before his time, there were several Sivite sects embracing within their folds a large portion of the Hindu population of the country. His primary object was to root out Buddhism from the country, and in order to attain that end, he countenanced every form of Hinduism including the worship of Siva, Vishnu, Sakti and Ganesa. He himself had great faith in the Vedantic doctrine of one God manifesting

himself by the creation of the Universe without the help of the *Prakrithi* or material basis. He did not discard the Gods and Goddesses of the Hindu pantheon, and it seems very probable that either he or his disciples gave great encouragement to Sivite worship in order to render Buddhistic worship obsolete. Nowhere, however, is Sankara mentioned as a destroyer of Buddhist temples and images. In all probability, he and his disciples took these shrines under their protection, and found it much safer to represent the idols worshipped therein as the Hindu God Siva, than to throw them away into the streets or destroy them. Even now such images are adored as those of Siva. There are other instances to show that Sankara encouraged the worship of the Gods and Goddesses of the Hindu pantheon. The presiding deity of Saraswathi, or the Goddess of learning at Sringeri, the Vishnavite temple at Bhadrinath in the Joshinath Mutt on the Hymalayan slopes, are cases in point.

Whatever Sankara's faith may have been, his followers are practically Sivites. The Smártha Brahmans, who acknowledge him as their principal teacher are all professed Sivites. Sankara did not admit any nuns into his monasteries, and the monks of the various orders are called *Dāsanāmis* from their using one or another of ten surnames. The surnames are derived from the names of academic titles of ten disciples of Sankara's immediate pupils. The first three, Saraswathi, Bhārati and Puri, are supposed to have been attached to the Sringeri Mutt. Thirthás and Sāgaras to the Sārada Mutt at Dwāraka, Vanas and Aranyas to the Goverdhana Mutt or Puri; Giri, Parvata, Sagara, to the Joshinath Mutt on the Hymalayas. Monks bearing the names of Aranya, Sagara, and Parvatha, however, are not to be met with now-a-days.

To commemorate the birth place of the Great Sankara and the cremation ground of his mother at Káladi, the present Svamiyar of the Sringeri Mutt built two temples in February 1910, in the most scientific manner (Balachakram). In one of these is located the image of his first illustrious predecessor, and in the other his favourite Goddess (Saraswathi), while around her, are seven other minor Goddesses, namely, Brāmhi, Maheswari, Kaumari, Vaishnavi, Varáli, Indráni, and Chamundi. A few yards to the south of these sacred edifices and midway between them is the holy banyan tree at the base of which the God



Ganapathy is established. Thus on the twelfth day after new moon (Dwādesi-Monday) were established Gods and Goddesses, nine in number, according to the holy rites of vedic ceremonies which were most faithfully and earnestly performed. Eight days prior to the installation of the images, vedic ceremonies began, and the images were consecrated by His Holiness, who invited Brahmans and other classes of Hindus from all parts of India to witness the ceremony. Thus what was once a ruinous village has now become a famous place of pilgrimage.

These in general differ from those of the Brahmans of the other coast in many important particulars.

Customs and manners peculiar to the Nambuthiris.

There are, it is said, sixty-four rules of conduct (*anācharams*), observed by Nambuthiris, for which they are even now ridiculed by their fellowmen of other parts. There is no reason why they should be objects of ridicule for their observance of these customs which are the outcome of certain peculiar social environments. Tradition generally attributes their introduction to the great Vedantist and reformer Sri Sankara Achariyar about 1100 A. D., while a few of them evidently owe their origin to Parasurama himself. There are, it is said, four *achārams* and sixty *anāchārams*; and only some of these latter, strictly called *Keralāchārams*, are peculiar to Malabar. These are given below in their order:—

1. You must not cleanse your teeth with sticks.

The substitute employed by the Nambuthiris, in fact, by the people in Malabar in general, is the charred husk of paddy.

2. You must not bathe with clothes on your person.

This practice is repugnant to the other Brahmans, whose codes forbid bathing in a nude state.

3. You must not rub your body with the clothes worn on your person.
4. You must not bathe before sunrise.
5. You must not cook your food before you bathe.
6. Avoid the water kept aside during the night.
7. You must not have any particular objects in view while you bathe nor make *Sankalpa* preliminary to a bath.

The other Brahmans must make the *Sankalpa*, an invocation to the water Goddesses, for the bestowal of the spiritual benefit of the bath.

8. The remainder of the water taken for one purpose must not be used for another purpose.
9. You must bathe if you touch another person.
10. You must bathe if you touch polluted wells or tanks.
11. You must bathe if you happen to approach any of the polluting castes.
12. You must not tread over a place that has been cleansed with a broom until it has been sprinkled with water.

This practice of sprinkling water after the sweeping with a broom is not required in the East Coast unless the ground has been specially polluted or is to be used for the performance of a religious rite.

13. Put on the forehead a particular mark with ashes. Put three horizontal lines on the forehead with pure, burnt cow-dung.
14. You must repeat mantras yourself.

This means that the Nambuthiri shall be his own priest, not repeating the mantras at the dictation of a priest. The other Brahmans must have an officiating priest even if the Karta (doer) knows the mantras himself.

15. You must avoid cold rice.
16. You must avoid leavings of the meals of children.
17. You must not eat anything that has been offered to Siva.
18. You must not touch the food with the hand, when serving it.
19. You must not make use of the ghee of buffaloes for *Hómam*.
20. You must not use buffaloes' milk or ghee for general ceremonies.

No such prohibition seems to be observed by the other classes of Brahmans though preference is, of course, given to cow's milk or ghee.

21. Take your meals in such a way as not to necessitate taking out any portion of the morsel once put into the mouth.

This a very wholesome habit most religiously observed by the Nambuthiris. Even the most ceremonious Brahmans of the other coast will be content with putting aside the remnant of a handful in a corner of the leaf on which the food is served. This will not do for the Nambuthiris.

22. You must not chew betel while you are polluted.
23. You must observe the conclusion of the Brahmachari period.

This is the Samavarthanam ceremony already referred to, and should be celebrated at the conclusion of the Brahmacharyam.

24. You must give presents to your *Guru* or Preceptor.

This means that the Brahmachari before formally concluding the *Brahmacharyasramam* should give presents or *Dakshina* to his *Guru* or Preceptor.

25. You must not repeat the Vedas on the road.
26. You must not sell women (receive money for girls given in marriage).

This is an unnecessary prohibition in the case of the Nambuthiris as matters now stand.

27. You must not fast in order to obtain fulfilment of your desires.

Absolute fasting is unknown in Malabar.

28. Bathing is all that woman should observe if she touches another who is in her menses. A man should change his thread and undergo sacred ablution. Women in their menses are not required to keep aloof as with the other Brahman women.
29. Brahmans should not spin cotton.
30. Brahmans should not wash clothes for themselves.

On the other coast, no religious Brahman will touch clothes washed by washermen without their being first dipped in water.

31. Kshatriyas should avoid worshipping the Lingam.
32. Brahmans should not accept funeral gifts from Sudras.
33. Perform the anniversary of your father, father's father, mother's father, and both grand-mothers.
34. Anniversary ceremony should be performed at the end of the year counting from the day of death.
36. *Diksha* should be observed till the end of the year after death.
37. *Sradhas* should be performed according to the days of asterism of death.

The anniversary of a person's death is regulated not by the days after full or new moon as on the other coast but by the days of asterism of death.

38. The funeral ceremony should not be performed until after the pollution caused by child-birth has been removed.
39. An adopted son should perform *Srādha* for his adoptive parents as well as his natural parents.

In other parts of India the adopted son is relieved of the obligation to his natural parents.

40. The corpse of man should be burnt in his own compound, *i. e.*, not in public cremation grounds as among the people of the East Coast.

This custom is said to have been initiated by Sankara Achariyar himself, who, being refused help by the Nambuthiris in the cremation of his dead mother, was driven to the extreme necessity of burning the corpse in the compound of his own house.

41. *Sanyasis* should not look at women.
42. They should renounce all worldly pleasures.
43. *Srādha* should not be performed for deceased *Sanyasis*.

*Arādhana Srādhas* are performed in their honour by the Brahmins of the East Coast.

44. Brahmin women must not look at any men other than their own husbands.
45. They must not go out unless accompanied by maid-servants. Nayar women always go in front of Nambuthiri female to warn people of their coming and keep men out of their way.
46. They should wear only white clothes.

No Brahmin female on the other coast, whose husband is alive, will wear white clothes.

47. The nose should not be pierced.

Outside Malabar the noses of Brahmin women are always bored.

48. Brahmins should be put out of their caste if they drink any liquor.
49. They should forfeit their caste if they have intercourse with any Brahmin women other than their wives.

Both these rules, every Brahmin is required to strictly observe, but the infringements are seldom punished with the ostracism they rightly deserve.

50. The consecration of evil spirits should be avoided, *i. e.*, the worship of ancestors should not be performed in the temples.
51. Sudras and others should not touch the idol in a temple.
52. Anything that is offered to one God should not be offered to another.
53. Marriage, etc., should not be performed without the sacrificial offering (*Hóman*).
54. Brahmans should not give blessings to each other.
55. Brahmans should not bow down to another.

*Namaskárams* or making obeisance to elders and *Anugrahams* or blessings in return are very common in the East Coast.

56. Cows should not be killed in sacrifices.
57. Do not cause distraction by observing the religious rites of Siva by some and those of Vishnu by others.

Sectarian controversies in regard to Siva and Vishnu are strictly prohibited. The people of Kerala are to hold both in equal veneration. In fact, the mission of Sankara Achariyar was to establish Hinduism on a non-sectarian basis.

58. Brahmans should wear only one thread (irrespective of their civil condition).
59. The eldest son alone should marry.
60. Ceremony in honour of a deceased ancestor should be performed with boiled rice.
61. Kshatriyas and other castemen should perform funeral ceremonies to their maternal uncles.
62. The right of inheritance among Kshatriyas, etc., devolves on nephews.
63. Widows should lead the life of *Sanyásis* (strict celibacy).
64. Sati should be avoided.

The law giver of Malabar has made a clear advance upon the customs of the original countries, which, at the time of the colonization of Kerala, permitted Sati.

When a Nambuthiri having his wife and children is about to die, a few gifts of cows or some money as equivalent are made to the Brahmans. When he is at the point of death, his body is removed with his head towards the south to a cushion of *Kusa* grass on the floor of the *Thekkini* or southern hall, which is purified with cow-dung. Some river sand or earth around a *Thulasi* plant is scattered

on the floor. Some more gifts (*Yátrádánam*), i. e., gifts to help the spirit of the deceased in the journey to the other world, are also made at the time. Verses of the *Rig veda* are whispered into his ears, while divine names are also recited in his presence. When he is dead, the limbs are straightened, and the body is placed on three pieces of the bark of a plan-tain tree. The *Adiyárs* or the servants of the family make ready the fuel and other things necessary for the cremation.

Meanwhile the sons of the deceased bathe, and dressed in the *tatoo* form return home, wash their feet and put on the *Kusa* ring. The eldest son, who is the chief mourner, and his younger brothers must take part in the ceremony with the recital of holy *mantrams*. If any of the brothers happen to be a child, another grown up member touching him, must recite them. The chief mourner sprinkles some water on the dead body, and with a knife touches every joint from head to foot. Putting the knife aside, he washes his hands and sprinkles some more water on it. The body of the deceased is then well washed with water mixed with well ground green turmeric and another root. It is then dressed in new garments, and marks of *Gopichandanam* and sandal are put on the forehead, chest and hands. Some *tulsi* leaves are also thrown over it. The bier is made ready by the *Cheetiyan* (*maran*), and the dead body is placed on it and carried on the shoulders of the sons to the cremation ground which is generally in the southern part of the compound, where it is placed near the western side of the pyre. The sons then untie their tuft of hair, remove the *kusa* ring and wash their feet. Putting on the *kusa* ring again and washing their feet they prepare a *hómam* with the fire from his *Aupásana* as directed by the priest, and some *ágnya* (ghee) oblations are made with the recital of the text. The pyre which is made with the branches of the mango tree is also consecrated by the recital of holy *mantrams*, and the mourners all go round it, repeating *mantrams* dictated by the priest. The dead body is placed on it with the head towards the south, and the sacred fire already prepared is placed on the chest of the deceased in three places. As the fire burns brightly, bundles of *kusa* grass, sandal wood and ghee, are also added to the flames. While the dead body is burned and reduced to ashes, the wife of the deceased is asked to bathe, and as she is about to plunge in water, she unties her tali

(marriage-badger) and gives two of them along with two bangles to be thrown into the fire. She returns home after her bath, sits or lies down on the floor, mourning for the loss of her husband.

Vedic texts are recited while the body is burning. Meanwhile the chief mourner, carrying a pot of water on his left shoulder and accompanied by his brothers, goes three times round the pyre, letting water leak out by making holes in the pot; and on completing the third round throws it backwards into the fire. Having the brothers in front of him, he returns (without turning back) to the courtyard where they go round the servants and their implements; and then prostrate towards the east. They then perform *Udakakriya* (libation of water), and return home after bathing, and fast for the night. Next morning they bathe, and after their usual *Sandhya* service they sit on planks in front of which there is a lighted lamp, and they all get shaved. Touching paddy and a piece of gold, they bathe and perform four libations of water, two for the day and two for the day previous.

The chief mourner, who has touched paddy and gold, is also required to keep a knife with him till the twelfth day. Every day the sons bathe early in the morning, perform the morning service (*Sandhya Vandanam*) and, dressed in the *tatoo* fashion, individually perform two libations of water, after which they again bathe and go home.

The next item of the ceremony is the *Patta-nátukal*, or planting a palmyra leaf two feet in length. It is left sticking up in the south-eastern part of the yard (*mittam*) within the quadrangular edifice. The sons first adore it, offering some *tulsi* leaves and sandal paste. After purifying a portion of the floor with cowdung and laying on it three blades of *kusa* grass and worshipping it with the offering of water and flowers, two *pindams* (rice balls) placed on a plantain leaf with gingelly seeds thrown on them are given to the spirit of the departed, which is believed to be present there. All of them prostrate before the leaf; a portion of it is given to the crows, while the remaining portion is thrown into the water. Thus the libations of water and the rice ball offering to the departed spirit are continued for all the ten days. *Sanchayanam*, or the collection of the bones, falls on the fourth day, when the sons of the deceased and the priest

go to the cremation ground, and the eldest son, while the others are touching him, sprinkle a mixture of milk and water and collect the bones, which are then put in a pot to be buried underneath a tree. A pit is dug and the ashes are collected and buried in it. After this they bathe and return home.

Fifth day after cremation, Tuesday, Friday and the day of asterism of the birth of the eldest son are all avoided for this purpose.

On the 10th day, after the performance of *Udakakriya* and offering of rice balls, the palmyra leaf is removed after due adoration. All the members of the family wear *mattu* brought by the washerman and after a while change it with a sprinkling of water. The house is swept clean and purified with cowdung. The members then bathe and take their meals.

On the morning of the eleventh day, after the usual morning service and adoration of Ganapathy, the chief mourner makes the gift of a cow to a Brahman for the benefit of the departed spirit and remunerates the priest and other Brahmans who have helped him in the performance of the ceremonies during the previous days. A *Srādha* (*ekódhishtam*) is also performed, and for which a Brahman is fed, and dismissed with presents of cloth and money. The wife and sons of the deceased offer *pindams* individually and perform *Udakakriya* by the side of a river. They return home after a bath, and everyone of them takes a dose of *Punyāham* (water sanctified by holy mantrams by five Brahmans). Henceforth they become free from pollution. From the twelfth day for the whole year the chief mourner bathes early every morning, performs his religious routine, feeds a Brahman, giving him a few annas, after which he offers *pindams* to the departed spirit. This is called *Nitya Srādham*, and a similar one at the expiry of every month is also celebrated. At the end of the year, i. e., 360 days, *Sapindakarana* *Sradha* is performed, when also similar formalities are gone through. The spirit of the deceased is then supposed to enter the world of the *Pitris*. The son during the year under reference is in *Diksha*, and has to lead a life of abstinence including such very minute observances as sleeping on the floor and his wife also doing the same along with him. He is forbidden to use tobacco, betel and nuts, to get himself shaved, or to have any kind of luxury during this period. The wife of the deceased is also under a similar vow. Even



during the ten days after death, there are some restrictions which they have to follow. The brothers cannot freely touch and talk with one another. They should avoid lying on bed, oil bath, chewing betel, ghee, milk, salt, two meals a day, and sexual intercourse. All the holy *mantrams* for the daily religious ceremonies and those before taking food alone may be repeated.

If a baby dies within the first ten days after its birth, the maid servants may bury the dead body. If on the 11th day, the dead body is handed over to the earth, *i. e.*, a member of the family buries it, and becomes pure by a bath and taking a dose of sanctified water. This method of burial is resorted to, till a child is two years of age, but this is by some held to be objectionable, while the others urge the necessity of burning the dead body in a way more or less similar to that already described. The chief mourner should perform the libations of water and offer *pindam* to the departed spirit for the ten days, and be under a *Diksha* either for 41 days or for a year.

If a woman during the menses, pollution or after delivery dies, the regular funeral obsequies cannot be performed without purifying the dead body, for which several methods are prescribed. Some are of opinion that the corpse must be well washed and bathed in a tank. In the event of the pollution belonging to it being over, a *mattu*, *i. e.*, the washed cloth of the washerman may be enough. In some cases purification depends upon the gravity of the pollution or impurity. In extreme cases, a Brahman after bath should dress it in a *mattu* and sprinkle some water on it. He should then bathe and approach it and repeat the same process a number of times, when it becomes fit for funeral ceremonies. The Brahman finally becomes pure after a bath and taking a dose of the sanctified water already described. There is also another method. A bundle of *Kusa* grass is well threshed, and in the liquid obtained from it, a little of earth from an ant-hill, cowdung, cow's urine and holy ashes, are added and the mixture gently heated. If a few drops of this mixture be sprinkled with the recital of holy texts, the corpse may be set free from impurities. Then the usual funeral ceremonies may be commenced.

In the case of women who die during pregnancy, elaborate rules are laid down for cremation. They are omitted for want of space.

The funeral ceremonies in vedic times, according to Aswalayana Grihya Sutras and Yagnavalkya, appear to have been much simpler, but at present the performance of these ceremonies is in accordance with Gáruḍa Purāṇa, which is said to be a comparatively modern work. The common belief is, that when a man is dead, the two messengers of Yama, king of justice, wait near at hand, and appear before the released spirit, which is said to be of the size of a thumb (*Angushtha mātra*). They bind the spirit and convey it to Yama's abode, where it meets with the recorder of his actions, Chitrāgupta, whose business it is to note down the good and evil deeds of every person born in this world with the resulting merit (*punya*) and demerit (*pāpa*). According to the balance on the side of merit or demerit is the judgment pronounced on its future career.

The disembodied spirit at this stage can neither enjoy Heaven nor suffer the pains of Hell, until it is invested with a kind of physical body composed of gross though ethereal particles. It is then instantly hurried back to the ground of cremation (*smasāna*) and by feeding on the rice-ball offerings (*pīndas*) and the libations of water which the sons of the deceased offer for ten consecutive days, it acquires a material body of the necessary sensibility. Thus on the tenth day it acquires an intermediate body which is sufficiently formed to possess the sensation of hunger and thirst, and on the next two days it feeds voraciously and gains sufficient strength for journey to the future abode which may be Heaven or Hell. In the latter case it requires the nourishing food to pass the terrible ordeal awaiting it.

The road by which Yama's two messengers force the spirit of a wicked man to descend to the regions of torment is described in the first two chapters of Garuḍa Purāṇa. The distance to Yama's abode is said to be 86,000 leagues or *Yōjanas*. The condemned spirit with the newly acquired body is made to travel at the rate of 200 leagues a day, "finds no shady trees, no resting place, no food, no water". At one time it is exposed to the burning heat equal to that of 'ten Meridian Suns', at another it is pierced by icy cold winds. At one time its tender frame is pierced by thorns, at another it is attacked by lions, tigers, savage dogs, venomous serpents and scorpions. The spirit of the deceased is thus subject to countless sufferings and torments both in its journey to and in Hell for the sins or

bad deeds on earth. To secure immunity from future punishment and make the passage of the departed spirit peaceful and pleasant, the various ceremonies already described are performed; Vedic texts, *Taraka mantrams*, are whispered in his ears at the dying moments, and divine names (*Vishnu Sahasranamam*) are recited in his presence. *Yatradanams*,—gifts of cows, light, shoes, umbrellas, water, etc.,—are made in order that their shades may serve him in his journey to Hell. Thus by the performance of many elaborate ceremonies, the sufferings and torments of the spirits are believed to be not only much mitigated but also is its career in the world of *pitris* made much happier. The spirit of the just, and those who have done good deeds on earth are invested with celestial lustre, moved by gentle breeze or carried in Heavenly cars to the world of *Pitris* (*Pitri Loka*), where they are adored as Gods, whose aid is sought at the commencement of every auspicious ceremony in a Nambuthiri family.

A Nambuthiri has to perform the *Sradha* ceremony for his father who is dead; for his paternal grand father and grandmother; for his mother after death, her father, and mother, and his paternal uncles. He has to perform the ceremony for his brother or brothers that are dead. Women have to perform the same ceremony for their parents and husbands. On the new moon days also the ceremony in a simpler form is performed by the senior member of the family. It is done either with a gift of a few annas or with feeding a Brahman along with money gifts and the recital of holy texts. For those who have died unnatural deaths a different course of ceremony called *Narayana Beli* is prescribed along with the performance of the annual *Srādha*; but there is no pollution, no *Diksha*, nor need the libation of water be performed. Thus in the *Srādha* ceremonies, the following relatives (1) Father, father's father, and father's mother; mother, mother's father and mother's mother; father's brothers; mother's brothers, are supposed to partake of the offerings. In fact, they form a corporate body bound together by a right of participation in the offerings, and these participators are called the *Sapindas* and *Samānodakas*. Practically, however, this relationship extends only to three generations on each side, and in this way a kind of family chain consisting of seven links is formed with the father, grand father, and great

grand father, on one side, and to son, grandson and great grandson on the other (Manu V. 60). The first three are believed to depend on the living pater-families for their well-being, and after his death, he also becomes a similar dependent on the three succeeding generations.

Propitiation and gratification of the manes by *Sradha* and other ceremonies are acts producing reflex benefits to the performer, and tend to bring on prosperity to himself and to his family.

Closely connected with the caste system are the rigid theories of pollution, which may be classed under two heads, namely, pollution by approach and that by touch. Mention has already been made in the treatment of the low castes in the first volume about the recognised scale of distances at which members of each of the polluting castes must stand from a man of the higher caste or his house, the distance increasing in proportion to the low status of the caste. There are also castes low in the social scale mutually conveying pollution. Besides the two kinds of pollutions mentioned above, there is also what is called ceremonial pollution, which also may be either the one or the other. A person ceremonially polluted conveys pollution to even members of the same caste. Women are regarded as ceremonially polluted during their monthly periods and after delivery; and they convey this as a kind of atmospheric pollution. They have to live in seclusion during this period. Their purification, which cannot be said to take place until after a certain number of days, has to be performed sometimes by members of a specific caste other than their own.

A death or birth in a family entails pollution on all the agnates and cognates. In the case of the Nambuthiris and other Brahmans this lasts for ten days, and has to be removed by a bath and certain prescribed ceremonies. The functions of the barber and washerman are also important in this connection. These pollutions sometimes, vary according to the closeness of consanguinity. All *Sapindas*, i. e., those connected by the same cake or *pindas* have ten days' pollution in both the cases; but the male descendants of a father and grandfather and girls before marriage have the same pollution by birth. All *Sôdakans* (those to whom mere libations of water are offered)

of three degrees of consanguinity from the seventh have pollution for three days only. If an agnate of the seventh degree of consanguinity happen to have a son, another member of the agnates of the seventh degree may have only three days' pollution, if the latter would tell the child that he would like to have only three days' pollution thereafter. The descendants of a mother and grandmother (mother's mother and father's mother) have only three days' pollution in the case of a birth or death among themselves. If they happen to be either *Sapindas* or *Samanódakas*, they will have ten days' pollution. In the case of women the pollution will be that which affects their husband but will not be binding on their children. When the members of a family are under a death pollution and when they are again polluted by birth, the second pollution may be removed by purification from the first.

Even at a remote period the political and social organizations of the Nambuthiris were highly developed; and it is said that Brahmans were originally grouped in villages or *Gramams*, and that the affairs of the groups were under the management of the headmen or leaders of *Grámapas* (*Grámani*). The groups of villages were placed under chieftains known as *Taliyatiris* who were generally nominated for three years by special electors from the sixty-four villages into which Kerala was divided. There was a general theocratic council for the whole country which became a political and social institution, subordinate to which there were minor assemblies. Grand meetings consisting of the *Taliyatiris*, the elders of the community and the people in general, were held at Tirunavai during the Mahá makham festival and afterwards at Thríkanamathilakam at which all important political and social matters affecting the welfare of the community were discussed and settled. The meeting at the latter place continued throughout the reigns of the Perumals; but after the dissolution of the kingdom of Kerala into various independent principalities their political organization gradually began to decline. They confined their attention chiefly to religious and social matters in the villages in which they had settled.

The principal villages in the State were Perumanam, Irinjálakūḍa and Chovaram in the adjacent British territory, and these had richly endowed institutions for the study of the

*Srautha Karmas*, (rites according to the *Srutis*) and for helping, by money gifts, those who performed them. These institutions were called *Sabhāmadhams* and the study of the subjects had long ago ceased to exist, but the income of these institutions is utilized in giving a kind of allowance to those who have performed *Yāgams* or sacrifices and other Vedic rites, and also for the expenses of the temples attached to them. The properties which are mostly landed, are managed by four individuals appointed by the *Karmis*, who meet once a year, go over the accounts and share among themselves the net proceeds and also admit new members who perform similar rites into their *Yōgam* or society. It is curious to note that these institutions are mostly in the Pālghat Tāluk, which is said to have been, in ancient times, an important Nambuthiri centre, though not a vestige of their residence is anywhere to be seen now except the landed estates of some of the landlords and a few temples under their management. There were similar institutions in Malabar and Travancore attached to their villages.

Besides the institutions above referred to there were other similar institutions *Sāstra Sabhāmadham* at Kumbalam and Agathiyur for the study of Grammar, *Mimāmsa* and *Vedānta*, both of which do not now find favour with the Nambuthiri youths as only very few attend them.

The division of the Nambuthiris into eight classes already described is based, to some extent, on their occupations. The Nambuthiris were, according to tradition, brought to Kerala as colonists to people the country; and Parasurama, their patron sage, found separate occupations for the various classes into which the community was divided. To some Brahman families were assigned the learned professions and the privilege of making sacrifices, to others the profession of medicine, sorcery, and magic, to a third astrology and astronomy, to a fourth the duty of performing pujas in temples and so on. While some had the Government of the land, others were armed to protect the country from foreign incursions and internecine quarrels. There were also others who were endowed with special spiritual functions. But these exclusive divisions, which were strictly maintained till recently, are now beginning to lose recognition. The *Grāmani* adhyans were held in a somewhat low estimation by other Nambuthiris,

because they had exercised territorial sovereignty, and were therefore held not competent to study the *Vedas*. Among the highest class of Vedic Nambuthiris, the Rajas of Chembakasseri Ambalapuzha or Porakad, Edapilly and Parúr were the chief territorial magnates. Really the profession of arms did not disqualify any Brahman from the study of the *Vedas* nor, detract them from their sanctimonious character. The Edapilly chief was the foremost who accepted arms from Parasurama, and was, so late as the Portuguese period, known to be fighting, by espousing the cause of the Zamorin and leading his land forces in the fight at the ford of Kumbalam. Barbosa tells us that 'the kings make great use of these Brahmans for many things except in deeds of arms.'

It must be remembered that Parasurama was himself a Brahman of the militant type, having fought with and destroyed the Kshatriya race thrice seven times over. The study of the *Vedas* and practice of the religious austerities were not in Malabar incompatible with the profession of arms, and this is testified by the fact that the instructors in arms of both Cochin and Travancore Rajas are the Brahmans of the Vedic class, and these enjoy to the present day the emoluments and privileges attached to that office though all the Rajas have left off the study of the use of them. In Cochin, the office is hereditary in the family of Peráttupurathu Nambuthiri, who is officially styled Peráttupurathu Panikkar. In Travancore, the office is held by Kalamthattil Kurukal. It is said that in former times every 'Perámpatta Panikkar' had to vindicate his title to the office by having an open fight, sword in hand, with a royal tiger, and if he succeeds in killing the animal he plants, in token of victory, a post in the inner court-yard of the Illam. It would appear that some of these posts are still to be seen standing in the yard.

There can be no doubt that the Nambuthiris associated themselves with the Government of the country even after they had ceased to have any direct control under the early theocratic system that prevailed in Malabar. They were the ministers of the Rajas, their judges, their generals in the field, and above all, their spiritual preceptors. It was, 'the king's Brahman and high priest', who received Vasco da Gama at the palace gates and conducted him to the king's presence at the Portuguese Admiral's first interview with the Zamorin. We have the

assurance of Barbosa that there is no more boast, for he tells us that the kings used to employ these Brahmans as messengers and ambassadors to go from kingdom to kingdom because they pass in safety in all parts without any one molesting them, even though the kings may be at war. Till but recently we have had Nambuthiri-Sarvadhikaryakars (Prime-ministers), Káryakkárs, (Governors) Judges, and Munsifs in Travancore and Cochin. Fifty years ago the highest courts of both these States were presided over by Nambuthiri Judges. But at present, in the public service, the Nambuthiri is nowhere. The Nambuthiris form the landed aristocracy of the country and claim the lands in *Jammam* or birth-right, tracing their title to an alleged original gift by Parasurama.

Those who are landlords do not cultivate the lands themselves, but let them out to tenants, mostly Nayars, on various tenures. It is seldom that they earn their livelihood, by personal exertion. They are such a favoured class that from the king downwards to the lowest peasant everyone would forego even his necessity to pander to their luxury. Instead of scorning delights and living laborious days as ordained by Sankara Smriti they make their utmost endeavour by deed and word to impress on others the idea that all excellences in the world are their birth-right and that whatever is low and mean is the portion of the lower orders. In fact, it is the Nambuthiris, of all Brahmans in India, who strictly follow the injunctions of Manu, "Never serve".

It is only the poorest of them who will consent to act as priests in temples. In some temples the priesthood is hereditary in certain families, and the priest, for the time being, has to confine himself to certain prescribed limits and lead a celibate life. Perhaps it is for his special sacredness, which is co-relative with his high position, that the priest of the temple Badaryásrama in North India, and also the priest of Siva temple at Tirivattur near Madras, is always a Nambuthiri.

The present economic condition is thus well described in Travancore Census Report (1901)—"As the pre-historic heirs to the entire land of Kerala, the Nambuthiris live on agriculture. But efficiency in an adaptation to changing environments operates as a severe handicap in the race'. The difficulties incidental to an effect of land division have contributed to



making the Nambuthiris 'a litigious population and the ruinous scale of expenditure necessary for the disposal of girls, be it of the most plebeian kind, has brought their general prosperity to a very low level'.

Thus the Nambuthiris do not adapt themselves to any of the requirements of modern days. Having left off their old ideals, they have not been entering into any of the pursuits which are thrown open to them in these days. As matters now stand, the traditional hospitality of the Hindu kings of Malabar which, fortunately for them, has not relaxed, is the only sustenance and support of the ordinary Nambuthiri Brahman.

Fortunately in the State, there is one aristocratic Vedic family the members of which, maintaining the religious life, are following trade, and are the proprietors of a tile factory. They had at one time invested a few lakhs of rupees in the construction of a cotton mill at Calicut and still have many shares in that Joint Stock Company. They are besides traders in other articles. One young member of that family is the editor of a popular monthly. Their example may well be followed by others of the caste who are not wanting in the necessary capital. The members of the non-vedic class, on the other hand, are more enterprising and some of them are gentlemen farmers and traders. Their children are reading in schools.

The Nambuthiris have been occupying and still occupy, in Malabar, Cochin and Travancore, the highest position in the order of social precedence; and are looked upon by the Nayars and the members of the lower castes as the 'holiest of human beings.' Many among them are landlords, and their tenant, peaceful and contented owing to their unexacting nature, pay their homage and customary dues generation after generation. They consider them not merely as landlords and benefactors, but even revere them as Gods on earth (*Bhudévas*). "Their persons are 'holy' their movements 'processions' and their meal 'nectar' ". Their low-born tenants and others of the lower castes dare not approach them within the polluting distance, nor see what passes within their sacred precincts. In fact they have long been and are even now very submissive and obedient to the members of this priestly class.

It will not be out of place, in this connection, to mention

a few instances of the nature of the conversation between one Nambuthiri and another and that between a Nambuthiri and a Nayar or other low-caste member. In the former case only the vernacular is used in the ordinary way; while in the latter, the superiority of the Nambuthiri should be shown at every turn. Thus a Nayar addressing a Nambuthiri, must speak of himself as *Atiyàn* (foot-servant), his rice is called 'gritti rice or *Kallàri*, his rupees, copper coins or *Chembu-Kásu*, his house as *Kuppadu* (dung-pit). He must esteem himself very low as he proceeds, lest the least sign of insubordination should provoke and ruin him. He must speak of the Nambuthiris rice as *Pazhayari* old or raw rice, his coppers as rupees, and his house as *Illam* or *Mana*. The Nayar must not call his cloth a cloth but 'an old cloth or spider's web.' The Nambuthiri's cloth, on the other hand, is called his daily white cloth or his superior cloth (*Vastram*). The Nayar while referring to his bathing must say, that he drenches himself in water (*nanayuka*—to become wet), but the Nambuthiri, on a similar occasion is said to sport in the water (*Nirátuka*). Should he speak of eating or drinking, the Nayar must say of himself that he takes food or treats himself to the water (*karikkàdi*) in which the rice has been washed. Should he refer to the food of the Nambuthiri, he must say that he tastes ambrosia (*Amritham*). A Nayar calls his sleeping 'lying flat', while the Nambuthiri is said to close his eyes or resting (went to *Pallikuruppu*) like a Raja. The Nayar must speak of his own death as *kuttam pizhachu* or died of sins, but of the Nambuthiri as *mutinnu ezhunnelli* (disappeared for ever). When the Nayar is ill, he says that his limbs have become stiff, but a Nambuthiri in a similar state, is said to be merely unwell. When a Nambuthiri has to be shaved by a barber, the expression that his 'hairs are cut,' is invariably used. When he is angry he is said to be dissatisfied. A Nayar cleans his teeth, but a Nambuthiri cleans his superior pearls. When he laughs, he displays his superior pearls. Such is the Euphuistic language used by the Nayars and other low caste men in addressing the Nambuthiris.

The Nambuthiris are generally very handsome and their complexion is of various shades. Their average height is 162 centimetres. They are mostly well nourished and rotund; and among them lean people are seldom found.

Appear-  
ance.

Excepting the Muhamadans, the Nambuthiris are perhaps the hairiest. The hair on the head is plentiful, glossy and wavy; and is allowed to grow in the form of an oval patch from the vertex or slightly behind it to a little on the back from the forehead. The tuft of hair or the *kudumi* is tied into a knot hanging over the forehead or at one side according to the fancy of the wearer and sometimes it is so done as to spread over the head. The rest of the head and the face and, in fact, the whole body excepting the back are periodically shaved. Gingly oil (*enna*) is used to keep the hair smooth and make it grow long. This is the orthodox fashion in Malabar, though exceptions are sometimes found. But, when a Nambuthiri's wife is pregnant or when he is the chief mourner in his family, he refrains from the barber for a year. This custom of having an oval patch, it is said, originated from an ordinance of Parasurama who had the tilt of the first colonists changed to the front for a national purpose. There is still a saying in Malabar "*Purvasikha paradesathu nishidham*," meaning 'the tuft of hair on the top of the head is forbidden in *Paradesa* (East Coast)'. The Nambuthiris grow their finger nails sometimes, very long. After bath, they wear on their forehead the horizontal Sivite mark '*tripundram*' with *bhasmam* or ashes, and the vertical Vaishnavite mark with *gopichandanam*. It has been remarked of the Nambuthiris' general appearance that there is about his good old person and his quaint looking dress and jewellery, a *sāstric* (mild and guileless) beauty which the eye delights to dwell on.

The Nambuthiri lady is generally very fair and handsome. Being strictly *gōsha*, the women shut themselves up inside their houses and seldom move about except on extreme urgency. They then shelter themselves behind broad round cadjan umbrellas specially made for the purpose, which are turned against the passers-by and from behind whose cover they cast their sparkling eyes beyond to have a look at the passing stranger. They have long and glossy hair which is parted at the crown and drawn tight to the ears with a knot at the back. After bath, they put on three horizontal lines on their foreheads with sandal paste. The Adhyan woman puts these on in a crescent-like form. They apply also eye-salves which extend as dark lines up to the ear on either side.

The Nambuthiris have little or no time for pastimes or recreations after their daily religious routine.

*games.* The *Yátrakali*, which is their great national amusement, is somewhat like a dramatic performance in which even the enlightened Nambuthiris take part. It is a socio-religious performance which has received no improvement in any of its details

Everything with the Nambuthiri is hoary with age. The young men amuse themselves with the foot-ball at certain seasons with the *Kottiyum Kólum*, *Chélakali*, or *Kalachikali* (playing with marbles). The fashionable and the less religious people play at chess, cards or dice or the one known as *káttam* (*Kambitháyam*). Most of them have a liking for *Kathakali* or the national dramatic performance. The *Thiruváthirakali* is the favourite pastime of their women. This is a very pretty circular dance in which a very large number of Nambuthiri women except widows take part. The Ambalavási and Sudra women also sing and dance with them either in the *Nalukettu* (quadrangular edifice) or in the open air in the spacious yards of their houses, but quite protected from the public gaze by out houses and the walls of the compound. The dance is accompanied by songs of different kinds known as *Pathinaluvritham*, *Panas* and *Kirthanams*, all recitals of the stories of the heroic actions of the gods mentioned in the *Puranas*. This is largely indulged in on the *Thiruvathira* and *Onam* days in the month of Dhanu (December-January) and Chingam (August-September). There are also other games, namely, *Parakali*, *Vattakali*, *Ammama* and *Ushinhal* or swing in which they at times take part; and these are their only exercises they have in addition to their daily domestic duties. Music is never cultivated as an art by the Nambuthiri women, and what little they know is due to their close intimacy with the Nayar women whose accomplishments are of course of a higher order.

The Nambuthiris are very sparing in their clothing, and do not seem to feel the shame of walking about almost naked, a habit which is not countenanced by the *Smrithi* which they profess to follow. The men wear an under garment (*koupinam*), which is a strip of cloth, passing between the thighs, the ends being attached to a string round the loins both at the back and at the front. They are strict *Swadéshis* and would not, on any account, go in for

*Dress.*

Manchester piecegoods, which are *taboos* to them. They wear round their loins, stretching a little below the knee, a cloth of local manufacture, four or five cubits in length, two and a half or three cubits in breadth, with a coloured border or sometimes laced at the edges. They do not use silk or coloured cloth of any kind or plain white cloth without a border. It is considered very fashionable or dignifying to wear it rather higher than the loins, that is, about the pit of the stomach. A second small cloth (*thórthumundu*) is worn over the shoulders and the chest. At home or in a temple close by, when he is at prayers, he is almost naked, either covered by a small loin cloth or only with a *koupinam*, which is a repulsive sight to others. In this he is a marked contrast to the Tamil Brahmans of the east coast, who are neatly dressed on these occasions. Their mode of dressing on religious occasions is peculiar and is known as *Thattudukkal*, which consists of a long piece of country-made cloth tied round the loin with a portion of it passing between the thighs and tucked in at the front and behind, with a front portion arranged into a number of reduplications. This mode of dressing exhibits a front covered by numerous folds hanging down from the waist to the feet, while the buttocks are almost exposed. They wear wooden sandals, but are not averse to leather ones, though they will not allow the heel of their foot to be covered up. On ordinary occasions, they dress like the Nayers. There is a tendency among the young men of these days to wear coats and caps, when they go out, and to be slightly influenced by the vices of modern civilisation.

The Nambuthiri woman, who is called *Antharjanam* or *Akathamma* i. e., one who is inside (strictly *gôsha*), also dresses in a peculiar style. While the ordinary Nambuthiri woman dresses in the style called *Nerinjudukkuka*; the Adhyan lady dresses in the style known as *Okkum Koluthum Vechutukkuka*. A white cloth (for, coloured ones and silk cloths are prohibited), about ten cubits in length, is fastened round the loins, a portion of it passing between the legs, and reaching well below the knee and also covering the breast. As an adornment a gold border is allowed to the cloth. They do not wear the *Ravikka* or half-jacket, which is but a recent introduction. At home, inside the house, they do not cover the breast; but, when going out, they cover themselves up with a long piece of cloth, leaving only the head and feet exposed. One end of the cloth is

so held up in the hand, which holds also the ' *marakuda* ' or the covering umbrella already mentioned, so as to cover the face and the body. They are accompanied by a *Dási* or *Vishali* i. e., a Nayar maid servant, who walks in front and calls out to the way-farers to move out of the lady's way. The Nambuthiris insist on their women carrying about their persons as much clothing as they would persistently deny to Nayar women.

The Nambuthiri wears but few ornaments on his person.

Ornaments.

He has finger-rings made of gold and often set with precious stones, of which one pattern is considered sacred and necessary on religious occasions. This is the *Pavitram*, which is of gold and of the thickness of an ordinary finger-ring with an ' 8 ' like figure worked on it, with dots on each side of it, while the rest is either worked in lines or is plain. In lieu of this, sometimes *pavitrams* made of *darbha* grass are put on, when performing religious ceremonies. The latter is, of course, among the most orthodox. The Nambuthiris bore their ears as other Hindus do, but are prohibited from wearing ear-rings. Those, however, who have performed *Agni-adanam* and are *Agnihotras* use ear pendants known as *Kundalams*, or less elaborate ones, *kunukkus* made of gold. They sometimes wear round their necks necklaces of *rudrāksha*, beads or *Thulsi-maní* (*Eleocarpus lanceolatus*) mounted in gold, the middle set with stones and curiously worked.

The prohibition against the use of valuable ornaments is even more strict in the case of Nambuthiri women. The Sankara Smrithi says—" She could wear on both arms only bracelets made of brass or bell-metal; but silver ones are not objectionable, and those of gold are never allowed. She could never have nose-rings, nor have her hair plaited, nor ornament her forehead with dots of beautiful pattern. The cloth round the loins should not be fastened with a girdle. She may wear an ear ornament made of gold ' *Chittu* ', and round her neck a string made of cotton thread with a *tali* hanging from it ". In practice, these rules, however, are not at present very strictly observed. In North Malabar, golden bangles are for the most part used, while in South Malabar and the Cochin State, bell-metal or brass bangles, as many as twenty-one, are worn to cover the forearm. The ornaments of the Nambuthiri women

are of a kind not worn by the women of any other caste. They wear rings on the fingers; they also use yalk's tail (tail of *Krishnámrigam*) in place of false hair. A peculiar kind of necklace called *Cherutháli* is also worn loose over the breast, and beneath this the Adhyan women wear garlands of *manis* or gold pieces along with other jewels known as *karumalapatta* and *kazhuthila*. Nambuthiri widows are not allowed to wear ornaments except the *táli*, and she is not to shave her head as among the east coast Brahmans.

The routine dietary of the Nambuthiris is simple, and consists of boiled rice which is eaten with vegetable <sup>Food.</sup> curries and pickles (*Uppilittathu*), the last course being sour butter-milk and rice. Their favourite curries are *Mulakrishyam* and *Upperi*. The former is a preparation of sliced vegetables boiled in water with salt and seasoned with coconut-oil and Karuvéppila (*Bergera konigii*); while in the latter the water in which the vegetable pieces are boiled is strained and the slices themselves are fried in coconut oil. *Kálán* (a vegetable preparation in sour butter-milk seasoned with a mixture of coconut, chillies, etc.) is a curry much appreciated by them. Chopped vegetables, especially plantains, and pappadams (round wafers made of the meal of the kidney bean) fried in the coconut oil, are also in some families eaten at every meal. *Kanje* or rice gruel with its accessories forms their favourite mid-day meal. Tea and coffee are not prescribed in their sastras, and yet some indulge in them. The Nambuthiris do not, as a rule, drink cold water, but the liquid boiled with dried ginger, cumin, and coriander seeds and sometimes with horse-gram forms their favourite beverage. They like very sour and sweet things but do not like pungent preparations.

Before partaking of meals a Nambuthiri must bathe and do *pūja* to the deity, which consists of an offering of rice to the household fire (*grihyagni*) and to the crows. His time for dinner is generally between 10 and 11 A. M. When there is no stranger, the wife serves meals to her husband; and takes charge of the leaf out of which the husband has dined, and holds it in her right hand; before rising the husband touches it with his left hand to indicate that the wife is eating in continuation and not the *Echil* (or the remains of the victuals), which are considered impure. If there are guests dining with

the Nambuthiri, the food is served by a Pattar Brahman or by a young member of the family. It is served on plantain leaves which take the place of plates.

The Nambuthiri ladies do not partake of the food cooked by Pattar Brahmans, but the male members of the *Illam* have no objection. Strictly speaking, the Nambuthiris are allowed only one rice meal a day, their supper being confined to fruits, candied cakes of wheat or rice boiled in milk with sugar and spices. *Kozhakkatta*, a bolus-like preparation of boiled rice with cocoanut scrapings put into it is their delicacy. Ghee and dhol are sparingly used. In practice, however, they take rice not less than twice a day. A widow is always confined to one meal, but this rule is not always observed.

In large feasts, however, the preparations are totally different, more elaborate and grander. Various kinds of vegetable-curries, all well prepared, various kinds of sliced vegetables fried in cocoanut-oil and seasoned with salt, pickles of all sorts, *Payasams* (sweet preparations in which they are experts) are served along with boiled rice, one after another, on large plantain leaves on the floor in special halls, in several rows, *páyasam*, butter-milk to eat with boiled rice being the last of them. The Nambuthiris sit in front of them and the consumption lasts sometimes for more than an hour. Preparations for the *Othu Oottu* (vedic feasts) and other festivals are attended to with scrupulous care, and defect in the cooking of them, or the sight of an insect in any of the vessels containing the curries, is attributed to the divine wrath consequent on their failure in the discharge of their duties. The local astrologer is then sent for and his suggestions based on astrology are accepted. The divine wrath is appeased by additional offerings on a grander scale. Tamil Brahmans are not always allowed to dine with them. Sudras should be far away and cannot be seen. Nambuthiris are generally hospitable, and feed poor Brahmans and others who go to them, sometimes for several days.

*Rules for taking meals* :—In the eleventh chapter of the Sankara Smrithi there are certain rules laid down regarding the taking of food by the four orders of the Nambuthiris, *viz.*, *Brahmachari*, *Grahasathan*, *Vanaprasthan* and *Sanyasi*. The Brahmachari or the student who lives in his preceptor's house, may there take the food he likes. To him it is the purest



food equal to ambrosia. The *Grahastha* must, before he takes his meals, satisfy the hunger of the Gods, the *Pitris* (spirits of ancestors), guests, pupils, and household divinities. He can take only what is left after they are served.

The *Vanaprastha* should, as far as he possibly can, live on air. He can, at any rate, eat only the fruits and roots that grow in the forests; he should not eat anything that is ground in a mortar; he must satisfy himself with having his food ground by his teeth, that is, he should not partake of things boiled. The *Sanyàsi* can take only one meal a day; he must partake only of what he gets by begging; and water must be his only beverage. All follow the rules that are common to the *Nambuthiris*—no one should take unclean meals, and nothing should be taken within six hours of the occurrence of an eclipse of the sun or moon. Food may be taken after bath when the eclipse is fully over and the surface of the sun or moon is fully visible. If a Nambuthiri comes to know of any untoward thing having happened to a Brahman or a cow, he should desist from taking his food till he tries to do all he can to give them relief and till he has sympathised with them. He should not take meals at the moment when the king or his own relative is in grief, nor at the dead of night, nor at mid-day, nor when his previous food has not been well digested, nor at dawn, or at dusk. No food should be taken with wet clothing or when quite naked, or sitting at the window and not on the floor, or on a broken plank, or on tiptoe, or lying down, or sitting in the lap of another or from a broken vessel or the bare floor or holding the food in the bare hand without a leaf or a vessel. No salt ought to be served at meals before prayers are over. While sitting at meals children should not be abused. No one should sit by himself for meals, but an enemy, a wife, or one who by caste rules is not allowed to sit in the same line should, on any account, be allowed to sit together for meals. Rice prepared with gingelly seeds as well as curds should not be taken at night, nor milk during day-time. Food ought not to be taken before performing *hóman* (sacrifice) or before one's parents have taken theirs. Remains and refuse of victuals ought not to be taken. Food should be taken with ghee, it should not be taken outside a house or in view of a great multitude or in an uninhabited house. The stomach should at no time be over-filled. If the food and the *acharams* are pure, the heart will be pure and God bestows grace only on an

absolutely pure heart. Otherwise, one will be cast in the darkness of hell and will have to be there.

As has been said, the various classes into which the Nambuthiris were divided in ancient times, and the functions assigned to them, now exist only in name. They have also fallen intellectually from their once lofty position. In the Malabar Marriage Commission Report, it is said that, instead of taking the lead in every intellectual pursuit as do the Brahmans in other parts, the Nambuthiris have so far deteriorated that it would be difficult to find more than a few who have studied Sanskrit, which is the chief vehicle of their sacred texts. Not are there even very few who have studied the *literature*, *Malayalam*, their spoken language. The two richly endowed Vedic Institutions at Trichur in the State, and at Tirunavai in South Malabar, intended for the study of Rig Veda, are not properly attended by the Nambuthiri *Brahmacharis* of all parts of Cochin, Malabar and Travancore. Nor is the discipline in them very commendable.

The old Sanskrit College (*Sabhamadham*) near Trichur is now almost deserted. Thus they no longer care for the sacred learning of their forefathers. Their Smrithi prohibits the study of English, which is the language of the *Mléshas* or the unclean. They are not advancing, nor have they any inclination to advance with the progress of modern times; and they are completely out-beaten in the race of progress by their *Adyals* (Sudras), the Nayars. The junior members are forbidden to marry in their own community and have no voice in the affairs of their families: and therefore the feeling of responsible co-operation on the part of the unmarried males does not exist or is fast dying out in their family organizations. Living in a land of charity and finding no difficulty for maintenance owing to the liberality of the rulers, chieftains and others, they find no necessity to rise above the struggle for existence which prevails in other castes. They appear to be contented with the lot in which they are cast and have no higher ambition. In this respect they are a marked contrast to the other Brahmans.

While, during every ten years, the population of every caste is steadily increasing in the State, the strength of the Nambuthiris is steadily diminishing. This is especially owing to the

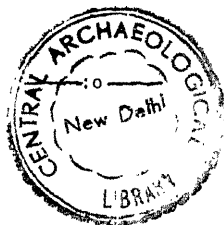
*marriage* of a large number of their girls at an advanced age, some remaining in celibacy for a long time, and owing also to the marriage of the junior members outside their own community. The women are kept in utter ignorance.

There are some who say that the Nambuthiris are not so bad as they are represented to be and that their position is loftier than that of any other Brahmans in Southern India. It may be seen that they are the best in the land, and that their loftier position is the inheritance of ages, and dates its origin from a time when their forefathers were both spiritual and temporal rulers of Kerala. But now, there can be no doubt that they are going down, and unless they wake up and rise to the occasion they will lose their status and be forgotten.

Thus far have the customs and manners of the Nambuthiris been described. If the religion of a people serves as the basis of their moral life, then their moral life is highly dominated by it. The Nambuthiris are beyond doubt a peace-loving people entirely devoted to their religion; untouched by progress, and unspoiled by the vices of modern civilization, it will be well, if they, still continue to represent the only unalloyed vestiges of 'Vedic Brahmanism.'

Conclusion.

68006





CATALOGUED.

10110101

375-00

Central Archaeological Library,  
NEW DELHI. 68006

Call No.572.55455/Iye

Author— Iyer, L.K. Anantha  
Krishna

Title— Tribes and Castes of  
Cochin

*"A book that is shut is but a block"*

CENTRAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL LIBRARY  
GOVT. OF INDIA  
Department of Archaeology  
NEW DELHI

Please help us to keep the book  
clean and moving.